

Wynne

Labour Monthly

EDITED BY R. PALME DUTT

THE PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT

DECEMBER 1940

SIXPENCE

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£379 : 3 : 2

Soldier Comrades and Red N.C.O.'s are now neck and neck, with R.A.S.C. (not yet a guarantor) on an equal footing. Red Infantrymen, in sending their first donation, we hope the forerunner of many, say: "We hope that by sending the L.M. round our barrack room and making a donation we are doing a practical piece of work for the people and the workers of the world." "Your paper is a barometer of our people's feeling for Peace (*real* Peace of course!)," say another group. They "hoped to see the Fund £100 this month". So did we, but we are rather far off it. Look at the total for the year: £ 379 3s. 2d. Can we make this up to £500 by the end of the year? Just over £120 needed—nearly twice this month's contributions. We know it is going to be very difficult, because war or no war, people will want to give Christmas presents; but could the difficulty not be solved by just adding LABOUR MONTHLY to the list of friends who cannot be missed out?

We are sorry that some friends, against whose name the proud "G" appeared last month, have not yet sent in their guarantees. Those whom we can remind, we do, but others have not disclosed their identity, so we must ask them now to make good their promises with a double sum for Christmas.

LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of International Labour

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Labour Monthly Discussion Groups

OUR list of Discussion Groups is growing, but very slowly. Nine new groups this month. Those meetings we have attended, or heard reports about, indicate the political value of this development. Discussion and argument on the themes of a current issue, between comrades of different political affiliations and trade unions, of varying stages of Marxist education and degree of political development, cannot fail to bring advantages to all. Some develop new approaches in exposition. Some gain that profounder understanding which discussion, *in addition to reading*, inevitably yields.

To assist existing Groups and to encourage the formation of far more new ones, we are producing Discussion Notes, beginning with the December issue. They are prepared in collaboration with the Editor himself, and are available on application. PLEASE SEND STAMPED ADDRESSED FOOLSCAP ENVELOPE.

Here is an observation from those energetic "Soldier Comrades" whose real efforts, both to increase the circulation of L.M. and swell the Fund, entitles them to be heard: "We observe that the L.M. has 50 Discussion Groups in existence but that only 6 contribute to the Fund. There seems to be something wrong, because if the magazine has to be reduced in size they will have less to discuss. In any case, DO THEY EVER DISCUSS THE FUND?"

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SPECIAL GROUPS

London Cab Drivers	S.E. London Busmen	Medical
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BOUND VOLUMES

Bound volumes for 1940 will be ready in January, but orders should be placed with us immediately, since 1939 bound volumes not only sold out, but a reprint was ordered and sold out too. The price will be 10s. 6d.; or in part exchange for 9 loose copies for different months, 4s. 6d. These loose copies should include January and October if possible.

SPECIAL SALE OF EARLIER BOUND VOLUMES

To relieve the congestion on our shelves we are prepared to dispose of these at greatly reduced prices. If you have not been a regular reader of LABOUR MONTHLY during the last 20 years, what better way of bringing up to date your knowledge of the *real* history of the interval between the two imperialist wars?

Prices are as follows:

1922 (Jan.-June)	30/-	1927	15/-	1932	7/6
1922 (July-Dec.)	30/-	1928 (1 only)	30/-	1933	10/-
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1924 (12 months)	25/-	1931	7/6	1938	7/6
1926 (1 only)	40/-	1936, 1937, 1939 are out of print			

NOTES

Will postal subscribers please note that two weeks' notice of change of address is necessary.

A certain number of copies of the July 1940, issue, containing R.P.D.'s Notes: "The Crisis of the British People", are now available, price 7½d. post free, from 134 Ballards Lane, London, N.3.

Notes of the Month

*Outlook for 1941—Will o' the Wisp of "Victory"—Super-Imperialist
World Blocs—Lies of the "New Order"—Total War—The Starvation
Race—Organisation for Death—On the Road to Fascism—Social
Democracy and Fascism—"Democracy is Finished in England"
The Real Fight for Democracy—The World Front of the Peoples—
The People's Convention*

THE year 1940 approaches its close in the midst of still deepening and extending war. All the early illusions of a limited war of short compass are ended. The transition from the European war of 1939–1940 to the world war of 1941 onwards is in process. While the military, naval and air operations are carried forward in the Eastern Mediterranean and Northern Africa, through the air conflict in Europe, the submarine operations in the Atlantic and the extending offensive of Japan towards South East Asia, all these operations bear still a tentative, preliminary character. The scene is dominated by vast diplomatic moves and combinations, alongside the clangour of intensified preparations in the workshops of war industry. The war camps, reaching across continents and drawing in all the capitalist States, are still in process of consolidation, and are forging their weapons for the supreme conflict for the new division of the world. The Washington consultations of the representatives of Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia; the Delhi Conference of Britain's Eastern Empire and its satellites, drawing together the rulers of countries with five hundred millions of subject populations; Hitler's negotiations with France and Spain to build up the new Pan-Europe under German domination in unity with Japan—these are the signals of the new enlarged phase of the war that is developing. The winter of 1939–1940 prepared the catastrophic events of the summer of 1940. What is the winter of 1940–1941 preparing?

AS the scale of the conflict enlarges, as the tasks of technical and economic organisation expand and reveal their protracted character, so the perspective of the war is extended, and the will o' the wisp of victory is postponed to remoter horizons by the statesmen of both sides. Churchill revises his former estimate of the approaching decisive campaigns of 1941 and 1942, and substitutes the decisive campaigns of 1943 and 1944 (thus incidentally rebuking Bevin's empty prophecy, on the day before Churchill's speech, of victory in six months). Hitler speaks of "the second cycle of the four years' plan" as "just beginning to run", and prophesies that its completion will finally make Germany economically independent of the British blockade—that is, by 1944. Roosevelt, successfully re-established for his third term to run till 1944, launches a vast conscription and armament programme, the fruits of which will only begin to become effective in a period of years. Such is the prospect which the rulers of capitalism are now offering mankind for years ahead. In the face of the beginnings of new economic crisis, and of the

rising discontent of the peoples, these same rulers of capitalism plunged into war in 1939. How much hope can they have that the human race will accept this grimmer programme, extending over years and years of misery, servitude and ruin?

THE imperialist rulers and their advertising agents seek to dress up this organisation of super-imperialist war blocs with high-sounding prospectuses of a “new order” and “higher international organisation”. Hitler proclaims the birth of a “new order” in Europe, which will end its economic and political fragmentation, and establish the old dream of European unity—under the leadership of German monopoly capital (replacing the previous similar aims of Anglo-French monopoly capital, dressed up under the guise of “Federal Union”). Japan proclaims the “new order” in Eastern Asia, whose elastic definition begins to reach out to the Anglo-French colonial possessions in the Pacific, the Dutch East Indies and India. The Federal Unionists, temporarily silenced after their rebuff in Europe and the collapse of their dreams of Anglo-French hegemony, now begin to lift up their heads anew and discover in Anglo-American co-operation the nucleus of a “new world order”, to be hastened by the political unification of the British Empire and the United States. In this way the ideology of the servants of imperialism shifts and adapts itself to the requirements of the successive stages of imperialism and its drive to increasing concentration in the forcing-house of war.

BUT the reality is different from the prospectuses. The tasks of international unification, alike in Europe and throughout the world, are in truth clamouring for solution. The necessity of international economic and political unification now forces itself on the consciousness of all thinking people. The straining of the world productive forces against the limitations of the old nation-States and Empires underlay already the last war. But such unification cannot be accomplished within imperialism. Precisely the necessity of this unification makes imperative the organisation of socialism.

The productive forces of world economy, which have outgrown the restricted boundaries of imperialist states, demand the organisation of economy on a world or international scale. Imperialism tries to remove this contradiction by hacking a road with fire and sword towards a single world state-capitalist trust, which is to organise the whole world economy. This sanguinary Utopia is extolled by the social democratic ideologists as a peaceful method of newly “organised” capitalism. In reality, this Utopia encounters insurmountable objective obstacles of such magnitude that capitalism must inevitably fall beneath the weight of its own contradictions. The law of the uneven development of capitalism, which becomes intensified in the epoch of imperialism, renders firm and durable international combinations of imperialist powers impossible. On the other hand, imperialist wars, which are developing into world wars, and by which the law of the centralisation of capitalism strives to reach its world limit—a single world trust—are accompanied by so much destruction and place such burdens upon the shoulders of the working class and of the millions of colonial proletarians and peasants, that capitalism must inevitably perish beneath the blows of the proletarian revolution long before this goal is reached. (Programme of the Communist International.)

This perspective, written twelve years ago, is in process of realisation in the present world war.

THE super-imperialist war combinations, which are now being organised, not for the purposes of peace, but for war, intensify the anarchy of capitalism. They involve the most intense suppression of national rights and independence; the destruction of civil rights under war emergency dictatorship régimes; the depression of the standards of the people to the lowest levels; the organisation of all States and peoples for war and destruction. The organisation of the super-imperialist war combinations, which seek to find means of integrating their economy and political forms for the purposes of war, is accompanied by the parallel intensified organisation of the economy and State forms within each country, of the entire life of the working populations, to the last ounce of labour and sacrifice that can be extracted, for the same purposes of war. Unlimited sacrifice for the war; conscription of everybody and everything (except big capital); harnessing of the whole population to the war machine; unlimited economic and political dictatorship: this is the meaning of total war; this is the reality behind the "new order"; this becomes the aim of organisation in both war camps.

THE war becomes a competition, not only in slaughter and destruction, but in starvation and enslavement. Not only the enforced starvation of the enemy camp by the weapons of blockade on either side, or the coercion of hostile populations by armed force; but competitive home-organised starvation, sacrifice of standards and sacrifice of rights, in the name of the sacred cause. The Bulletin of the Oxford Institute of Statistics discovers that, despite all the drive and all the restriction in Britain, German war production is still succeeding in spending the equivalent of £4,000,000,000 a year on the war against the British £3,000,000,000. The conclusion is at once drawn:

Time for another spurt in war production. Time for another cut in civilian consumption. And not least, time to deal drastically with this red-warning slow-up of industry.

In accordance with this, the President of the Board of Trade, the Metal Trust magnate, Captain Lyttelton, calls for the "tightening of belts":

Captain Lyttelton—who smoked a cigar while explaining these cuts at a press conference yesterday—said uncomfortable times were coming and "belts would have to be tightened".

He did not believe in trying to anaesthetise the civil population. It was going to be a much more uncomfortable war than it had been, and there would have to be restriction of near-necessities as well as of luxuries. (Press, November 16, 1940.)

The peacetime international cut-throat competition of capitalism, in which the workers are called on by their masters to chase one another down the abyss of lowered wages and standards in the desperate drive to capture export markets, becomes in wartime a veritable suicide race in mutual depression of standards, overwork, tightening of belts and restriction of consumption, with death round the corner.

BUT this ruthless regimentation, restriction of standards (accompanying increased profits for the millionaires), and organisation for death requires corresponding political forms. The traditional political forms of liberal free trade capitalism, which had already been heavily modified in the first

phase of imperialism, corresponding to the evolution of the financial oligarchy and its dictatorship, become less than ever appropriate in the conditions of the second imperialist war. In Germany monopoly capital had already developed the form of fascist dictatorship before the outbreak of the war. In Britain and the United States, where the much greater accumulation of wealth and imperialist super-profits left still a wide margin for the corruption of the leading sections of the working class movement and therefore rendered such drastic methods not yet necessary, the war found the remnants of the old forms still in existence, and a process of adaptation of these to the new needs was only decisively begun after the outbreak of war.

DURING these fifteen months a considerable journey has been travelled in the transformation of the economic and political structure of Britain and the United States to correspond to the war dictatorship of monopoly capital, although the change has not yet been completed. In Britain, in accordance with the traditional mechanism of monopoly capitalist rule on the basis of the corruption of the labour aristocracy, the upper Labour Party and trade union leadership has played the principal part in this transformation. The old parties have not been liquidated to give place to a new single governing fascist party; instead, the coalition of all the official recognised parties has constituted in effect a single governmental party, with monopoly rights in the usual channels of publicity, broadcasting, etc., and on the basis of which the Coalition Government rules. The parliament has not been abolished; instead, an obsolete parliament under Tory domination has been maintained, with suspension of elections and the disappearance of an official opposition. The Labour organisations have not been dissolved; instead, the workers find the independent functioning of their organisations paralysed by their own leadership. The right to strike has not been destroyed by a fascist enemy; instead the workers find their own leader, as Minister of Labour, instituting the legal prohibition of strikes. There is no Labour Front or Corporate System; instead, there is the state capitalist organisation of industry and economy under the domination of Big Business Controllers, with the labour movement drawn in as a mechanism of class collaboration through a network of joint committees. The restricted and precarious democratic rights still continuing, while heavily thwarted in their practical operation by the social, economic and political weight of the war machine and monopoly capital and by the official regimentation of the Labour movement behind the Government, partly hide from view the full extent of the changes which have taken place. This is not yet fascism, but it is certainly not democracy. When Lenin described the freest bourgeois democracy as the hypocritical cover of the dictatorship of the capitalist class, what would he have said of the present system in Britain?

IN the theory of Transport House fascism can be avoided, not by the organised working class leading all the working class and democratic forces in the struggle against monopoly capital, but by the chiefs of the Labour movement themselves fulfilling the rôle of the lieutenants of monopoly capital to control the workers, entering into alliance with monopoly capital, both governmentally and in industry, establishing the mechanism of class collaboration, prohibiting strikes, disciplining the labour organisations,

holding down the militants (if necessary, with a little police aid), preaching imperialist jingo propaganda, and presenting the whole in a dress of "war socialism" or "national socialism". This is the familiar theory of Social Democracy. Where it has led has already been seen in Germany and in France, as well as in other countries. The real fight for democracy against fascism can only be conducted against monopoly capital, since it is precisely monopoly capital which under modern conditions leads the drive to fascism. This is what is concealed when fascism is identified with a special foreign régime called "Hitlerism", instead of being recognised as the policy and system towards which the most powerful reactionary forces of monopoly capital drive in all countries.

At the outset of the present war the Communist International declared that the distinction between the "democratic" and fascist Imperialist States had lost its former significance. After fourteen months of war the American Ambassador to London caused a commotion by declaring, according to the report of an interview, that "democracy is finished in England and National Socialism will be the result"; that the talk of England "fighting for democracy" is "the bunk stuff", and that "democracy is all done". The commotion was not quietened by his subsequent explanation that he was speaking "off the record" and that the reporter had no right to publish a version; he characterised the version as "inaccurate" in "many" of the statements given, but did not explicitly repudiate the sentiments expressed. The significance of the episode did not arise from the sentiments, which were not novel, but from the fact that the American Ambassador was known to have been in the closest and most constant touch with the inner circles of the ruling class in Britain, that he shared their outlook and was one of the most fervent advocates of Anglo-American collaboration in the prosecution of the war. Whether consciously or unconsciously, he had let loose the kind of cat that is very difficult to put back in the bag, precisely because his judgement was not that of a socialist critic or opponent of the war, but obviously reflected what he had learnt from the ruling class in Britain. The leaders of monopoly capital in Britain and the United States are perfectly well aware that the old democratic forms are no longer compatible with the continuance of their rule; but to admit this openly at the present stage, when a gigantic world war front is being organised on the basis of this myth, would be equivalent to lighting dynamite at a moment when chloroform is essential for the completion of the operation.

The "war for democracy" is in fact hastening at a lightning pace the process of fascisation of all the countries of the capitalist world insofar as they are drawn into the orbit of the war; nor can any other outcome be possible in a war led and conducted by monopoly capital, by the big business enemies of democracy, for the maintenance and extension of their régime of domination and spoliation. Hence the complete falsity of comparisons of the present war with genuine democratic wars, such as the war of Democratic Spain or Democratic China, where the very needs of the war strengthen the attack against the big landlords and big capital and accelerate the pace of democratic advance. By the second year of this war the economics and politics of totalitarian war of modern imperialism are more and more com-

pletely dominating both imperialist war blocs, irrespective of the formal distinction between “democracy” and fascism. In this way living experience is tearing to pieces the fiction which seeks to conceal the real character of the war between Anglo-American and German monopoly capital for world domination by presenting it as if it were a war between “democracy” and fascism. Living experience is teaching millions that the real fight for democracy, the struggle against their oppressors, for their own liberation, is inevitably a struggle against monopoly capital and its war, for the victory of the working people and a peace made by the working people.

IN many ways, in many parts of the world, this real struggle for democracy is breaking through—not for the sham democracy of the old Liberal capitalist era which has vanished never to return, but for the real rule of the working people, which can alone end the war and advance on the road to socialism and the abolition of classes and class privilege. The clouds of confusion are rolling away; in the midst of deepening war, through limitless obstacles and hardships, the front of the peoples is forming over the world against the imperialists and war-makers. It is expressed in the battle of the Indian people, the overwhelming majority of the population of the British Empire, for liberation and against participation in the war. It is expressed in the awakening movement in Britain which is seeking to find a common rallying ground in the People’s Convention. It is expressed in the heroic struggle of the French Communist Party, shoulder to shoulder with the German Communist Party. It is expressed in the unbreakable war front of Chinese Democracy. Everywhere the true fight for democracy, for the real freedom of the people, is inseparably united with the fight against the imperialist war. Everywhere the front of the peoples, of the peoples in the warring imperialist countries and in the colonial countries, is inseparably united with the only complete democracy in the world, the Socialist Democracy of the Soviet Union, which maintains its power, independent and impregnable, against all imperialism, and shows the way forward for the peoples of the whole world. Here, and not in the false choice between the rival imperialist war camps which are massacring mankind in their battle for the spoliation of the world, but in the rising front of the working people in all countries, in the “democratic” and fascist imperialist countries, in the colonial countries, together with the people of the Soviet Union, against all imperialism, lies the real world alignment which holds the key to the future and which will bring real freedom and peace to the peoples of all countries.

FOR us in Britain the most urgent task in the next six weeks is the preparation and organisation of the People’s Convention. New wage movements are arising in the field of industry. The economic burdens of the war, whose full force is now beginning to fall on the backs of the people, are stirring and awakening millions, who may still be confused by the torrents of imperialist propaganda, who may not yet see the way out from the war, but who can already see that behind all the “democratic” claptrap the rich and privileged remain in power, are piling up fortunes out of the misery of the people and coolly demand that those who have least must sacrifice and go down lower. All the regulations against strikes have not been able to stem the continuance of strike action. All the regimentation of the Labour movement by the upper

leadership has not been able to suppress the ferment in the factories, in the trade unions or in the organisations of the Labour Party. The refusal of the engineers' demands by the engineering employers brings to a head issues which are impending in a whole series of industries, as the basic demand of the workers to maintain their standard of life in the face of the rising cost of living comes up against the iron determination of the imperialist war-makers to lower the standards of all workers. The strength and militancy of the organised workers determines the strength of the people's movement. The advance of the people's movement, on the basis of the Six Points of the Convention Call, is united with every immediate issue and struggle of the people against the exploiters. Victory requires unity on a common programme; and the way to unity lies through the People's Convention. The task of the People's Convention is to rally the forces of the working people in a common movement, which will be capable, not only of winning the immediate demands of the daily struggle, but of striking at the root of the present miseries by entering on the struggle for the power of the working people, for real democracy through a People's Government. Only such a People's Government can win peace and in unity with the peoples of all countries build up the new world order which must arise from the ruin of the present war. The next step in our advance is the building up of the united movement whose first rallying ground will be the People's Convention which meets in January.

R.P.D.

Labour Monthly War Pamphlets

No. 1

THE IMPERIALIST STRUGGLE FOR A NEW REDIVISION OF THE WORLD

By E. VARGA - 3d.

FROM time to time we publish articles of outstanding importance or appropriate for a wider circulation than the LABOUR MONTHLY itself. We propose, therefore, to republish these in pamphlet form.

The first of this series is E. Varga's important article in our November, 1940, issue: "*The Imperialist Struggle for a New Redivision of the World*". Students of Lenin's *Imperialism* will recognise this contribution from the Director of the Institute of World Economy and Politics in Moscow as an indispensable postscript to Lenin's classic. The pamphlet is officially recommended by Marx House to students of their correspondence courses.

Readers may wish to purchase copies for distribution amongst friends and workmates as an introduction to the Marxist analysis of the true character of the present war.

Copies, price 3d. each, can be obtained from all Progressive Bookshops; or from Central Books Ltd., 16 King Street, London, W.C.2; or they may be ordered direct (4d. post free) from the Publishers, LABOUR MONTHLY, 134 Ballards Lane, London, N.3.

The People's Parliament

BY HARRY POLLITT

THERE CAN BE FEW thoughtful workers who have not read some of the many books written around the subject of the Hungry Forties of the nineteenth century. The appalling exploitation and misery of the British working class in this rising period of capitalism, provided both Marx and Engels with invaluable material for some of their most important political writings and conclusions.

Now, in the declining period of British Imperialism, all signs point to the development of a stage which—unless the workers bring about a complete change—will inevitably go down to posterity as the Hungry and Bloody Forties of the twentieth century. If even a year ago anyone had dared to prophesy such things as have now become commonplace, the man in the street would have called him mad.

But facts cannot be denied, the ruin and devastation are plain for all to see.

In the present situation, amidst all the complexity, one thing is clear, and that is that Britain is under the domination of men who—in their lust for profit and markets, and their eagerness to defend *their* Empire—are prepared to stop at nothing to prevent their ill-gotten gains of the past from falling into the hands of another set of mad and unscrupulous robbers.

1940 draws to a close as a nightmare year, a year during which neither Tory, Liberal nor Labour Parties have one positive success to record for either the present or future welfare of the British people.

It has been a year of disaster for the common people, and it is the rottenness and decay of capitalism in its epoch of decline which is directly expressed in the policy of Hitler in Germany and of the Churchill Government in Britain.

Labour's own daily newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, hails Churchill as Britain's Man of Destiny.

That is the measure of Labour's shame, the betrayal of every principle and ideal of Socialism and Peace. For one thing now understood by most people is that, whenever Churchill speaks or acts, suffering and death are the result, exactly the same as when Hitler speaks or acts. Mr Bevin recently said that he never, in his wildest dreams, imagined that he would find himself in the same government as Churchill, which was a thought prompted by the ghost of his socialist conscience trying to cover up a betrayal of everything that the Labour Movement has been organised to fight.

For the Labour Party has become, in fact, the main buttress of a Tory Prime Minister who, in spite of pious hopes that out of death and ruin something more beautiful will arise, cannot open his mouth without promising more blood and toil, more death and suffering.

The whole terrible position that people are in means nothing to the Churchill Government or the leaders of the Labour Party, as can best be seen in the fact that the *Daily Herald* on November 7, gave a special panel of a part of Churchill's speech on the 5th, headed "Our Winter Watchword". What was that watchword? Read for yourselves:

It's a grand life if we don't weaken. There is the British watchword for the winter of 1940. We will think of something else for the winter of 1941.

(Churchill, November 6, 1940.)

There can be no doubt he will, and no one has any illusions about what its character will be.

The historic political parties of Britain—Tory, Liberal and Labour alike—who have for twenty-three years tried to frighten workers from supporting Communism, with the bogey that it “meant bloodshed and violence”, have themselves now reached a position where they have nothing to offer but bloodshed and violence in contrast to the constructive programme of Peace and Life that is the decisive feature of Communism.

The year 1940 has seen many great changes of tremendous importance for the future struggles of the workers, if their true political significance is recognised, and if the right kind of mass action is organised to meet the demands of the present situation.

War has come to Britain in all its grim reality, and, now that life has become precarious for us all, the political thinking of millions has been roused in a new way.

Lenin pointed out this very important fact during the last imperialist war, and we are witnessing on an ever widening scale just this process he refers to:

The experiences of the war, like the experience of every crisis in history, of every great calamity and every sudden turn in human life, stun and break some people, *but they enlighten and harden others*; and taken on the whole, taking the history of the whole world, the numbers and strength of the latter, except in individual cases of the decline and fall of this or that state, have proved to be greater than that of the former.

Out of the military and political defeats that British Imperialism has experienced in 1940, out of the lessons of Finland, the fiascos of Norway and Dakar, the débacle of Dunkirk—only rendered an epic because of the part played by the rank and file of the Army and Navy, by fishermen and merchant seamen—and out of the air raids, class consciousness is spreading and widening out amongst larger and larger numbers of people.

The increasing realisation of the criminal inefficiency and corruption of the ruling class, the bankruptcy of its whole policy, the fact that it has now only war, death and destruction to offer the people, represents the beginning of a movement that will soon organise its own decisive challenge to everything that monopoly capitalism and fascism stand for.

The political significance of this fact is strengthened by the fact that it has struck deeper roots and is more fundamentally understood in the rank and file of the armed forces than amongst the civilian population, as yet. First-hand experience of Sandhurst and Camberley types of military leadership, and the fact that conscription has taken into the armed forces tens of thousands of class-conscious workers, who understand their class position in their new occupation as they did in mine and factory, are mainly responsible for this.

It is a tremendous thing, and at one swoop has taken away from Labour the bogey used continuously for twenty-three years, that “if the workers take drastic action, the armed forces will be used against them.”

The extension of the war into an open struggle for new Empires, or the

retention of Empires gained by exactly the same methods as those which Hitler is using against Britain, the refusal to state concrete peace aims, the more intense forms of aerial warfare, the endless boasting of how many new bombers we are going to have next year (as if Hitler will not also have new ones) the meaning of all this is not being lost upon a large and growing number of workers.

The home policy of the Churchill Government is also being more clearly understood. The workers are seeing that the people at the top are always calling for more and more sacrifice, while they and their class who have everything are left entirely unmolested.

What are some aspects of this home policy, which is of course in complete harmony with and part of the foreign policy of the Government?

It is reflected in the rising cost of living, while the employers insolently refuse to grant wage increases, what time they are making record profits themselves, and using every device open to them to evade extra taxation and excess profits tax.

It is reflected in the efforts now being made to alter the index figure on which many important sections of the workers have their wages based, so that they can be defrauded out of increases in wages that are already overdue.

On top of this comes the Sales Tax, which aims to take £110,000,000 out of the pockets of the workers at the moment when the capitalists have millions in the banks, which they refuse to put into war loans because the rate of interest is not high enough. The imposition of this Sales Tax comes also at a time when thousands have been rendered homeless by air raids, and places terrific new burdens on workers and their families who have lost their homes, and everything they have slaved to maintain through long years of struggle and sacrifice.

The Government callously refuses to take any real effective measures for the protection of the people from air raids. The treatment of the homeless, of evacuees, eclipses anything that can be recorded in the early days of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. The fact is that the Government intend to do nothing about bomb-proof shelters, unless mass action is taken to make them. The ghastly sights to be witnessed every night in our principal cities of what the people are forced to suffer through improvised air raid precautions will remain a blot of shame on Britain's name for ever.

With the approach of winter, everyone is aware that disease and epidemic will take their dreadful toll, while Parliament solemnly discusses whether this can be avoided by giving the people a medicinal pastille as they enter the shelters.

The evacuation of the people is carried out in the most disgusting manner, and decent working folk and their children forced upon other workers who have not sufficient room for their own families, let alone the families of others. While this goes on, no attempt is made to construct large, well-equipped camps or to take over country mansions, hotels, and places where the rich have their hideouts.

All forms of social services are neglected, where they are not being deliberately curtailed, as in the cases of nursing, maternal and child welfare, relief of unemployment and education. Alongside this goes the unequal distribution of food and especially coal supplies. This time there is no hold-up by snow on which to put the blame for rotten distribution of coal, as was the case last

winter. But this time workers will not shiver in their homes in silence, as signs are beginning to show.

The internal restriction of popular liberties, the treatment of alien refugees, the shameful imprisonment of Nehru and John Mason, the resort to so many secret sessions in Parliament, the usurping of Parliamentary functions by Orders in Council, show clearly the aims of the ruling class both in home and foreign policy.

While waging a so-called "fight against German fascism", they use this crisis to impose British forms of fascism upon the British people. It is all these factors of home and foreign policy that are now increasing the opposition to the policy of the Government as a whole.

This opposition will grow and grow as people more and more realise that this Government and the capitalist system can never provide what the common people expect from life.

Never since the war started has the Government been able to organise any such mass enthusiasm as was frequently to be seen during the last war. It cannot get the people to sing, shout and dance for this war; it realises the distrust and disquiet concerning the whole policy surrounding the outbreak and conduct of the present war. The Government fear the future, not because of what a victory for Hitler would mean, but because it is apprehensive of what the working masses will do, once questions give rise to actions.

This is why Mr. Morrison occupies his present position as Home Secretary.

The development of political understanding in the people is a heartening and pregnant sign, but at the same time there are features of the present position which it would be wrong to ignore, for unless they are quickly overcome the struggle to end the Churchill Government will be longer and the war and all its resultant misery will be endlessly drawn out.

At the very moment when our whole destinies are in the melting pot, when the ruling class are engaged in this mad gamble with our lives and our future, there should be more working class activity being carried out in factories, local Labour organisations and street corners than ever in our history.

Instead, a paralysis has fallen upon many forms of working class activity, which reflects itself in the lack of meetings and activity of local Labour parties, trade unions, trades councils and co-operative guilds.

The blame for this is put entirely on to air raids. The new conditions under which we live are of course serious. But the basic fact remains that long before air raids materialised on the scale of the last three months, the paralysis had already set in. It has been the deliberate policy of dominant sections of the Labour leaders ever since the war started to damp down working class activity, but especially since Labour entered the Churchill-Tory Government.

Of the many crimes the Labour leaders have committed in this war, this is the worst. For it means in practice that none of the usual channels are open through which opposition to the policy of the ruling class backed by official Labour, can be expressed. This helps the Labour leaders to present the false façade of National Unity; it makes it easier for the Tories to use the Labour Ministers in rushing through Orders in Council, and ultimatums when ordinary facilities of opposition are not available. At a time when there is more discussion in workshops than ever in the history of this country, the opportunity for organising opposition against the war and its effects has never been so restricted.

As a result, the harnessing of the Labour machine to the Tory chariot is so thorough that it must arouse the envy and admiration of every fascist leader in Europe, and it is all done in the traditional British, hypocritical, 'gentlemanly' way.

Whenever the situation has prompted attempts to organise mass movements corresponding to the needs of the situation, there have been immediate threats by the Labour bureaucracy—the expulsion of Trades and Labour Councils from the Labour Party, the expulsion of D. N. Pritt, Harry Adams and J. Sqaunce.

This callous policy of the Right Wing leaders of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress is covered up by allowing the "Left-Wing", headed by Professor Laski, to make bold play with revolutionary phrases about "the new kind of Britain that must be born even while the war is on". By meaningless chatter about the "fight on two fronts", when the official policy is, not only to give full support to capitalist reaction, but to become the principal instrument in seeing that it is carried into effect by strangling every effort the workers make against this policy.

It is all fable what they preach. Not a word is meant to be followed by actual mass action. It is the old, old policy of the Left Wing of Social-Democracy covering up by its phrases the foul deeds of the dominant Right Wing Leaders, and because they are such willing accomplices in disorganising and confusing the working class forces, their responsibility is all the greater.

Our vigilance must be correspondingly great, and we must never lose sight of this strategy while we watch the revolt against the official Labour policy and the urge to find a way out of this war which keeps breaking through. As yet, these indications are only tiny steps—only the first cracking of the fetters which hold back the latent mass movement against the war, and more significantly, against capitalism as a whole. This stir of revolt is seen in the many successful local People's Convention Conferences; in the success of any Conference called for defence of civil liberties and in the really remarkable local activities to demand effective forms of A.R.P.

The rising tide is also shown in the 500 signatures attached to the impressive Call to the People's Convention in January. This is a most important new feature in the political situation at home, because the signatories do not express opposition only to certain aspects of the Government's policy but demand a completely new type of Government, one that can protect the people in reality and bring them peace.

This new feeling is not confined, furthermore, to the working class. As the signatures to the People's Convention Call prove, men and women in all professions are taking their place in the new political developments of our time, and the perspective of an unbreakable alliance between workers by hand and brain—to use an old labour phrase—is now in process of realisation. A particularly serious personal responsibility rests, in my opinion, on all those who have signed the Convention Call. We can all help to make the Convention not only fulfil the immediate needs of the mass of the people, but become the centre of a new kind of mass movement.

This new movement rightly led and organised, particularly in the factories and trade unions, can, by various forms of mass action, develop a political crisis and result in the complete defeat of the Churchill Government and the coming to power of a new type of People's Government.

This is the keynote on which all the campaigning for the Convention should be conducted.

It will be a condemnation of all our work if the Convention, from the point of view of political results, becomes merely a kind of safety valve to let off steam against the Government.

It should be a Convention where the delegates feel their own power and that of those who elect them, and are confident that the men and women could form a People's Government themselves and organise Peace and Plenty for the People. The delegates must be conscious of their responsibilities, and look upon the Convention as the most historic event in their lives, a turning point from which will arise those forces which alone can save Britain and its people from enslavement from their enemies, both at home and abroad.

The delegates must realise how vitally urgent it is for the people's mass movement to be organised with the utmost speed, because it is now literally a race between the forces represented by Churchill and Bevin, making for the inevitable development of reaction and fascist forms of dictatorship in Britain, and the forces which stand for real democracy, construction and peace.

In this race, victory goes to those who act most decisively and quickly and who have complete confidence in their policy, their class and their future. Obviously such a class is the working class and those allied with it.

But if the determination to win is not there, then the capitalist class will find their way out, and it will be a terrible one so far as the mass of the people are concerned.

It is with this conception that the campaign for the election of delegates to the Convention should be organised, and in order to ensure the correct character of the Convention the decisive places for the Campaign are undoubtedly the big factories, shipyards, mines, mills, trade unions and Trades Councils.

There the power lies—sparks waiting to be fanned into flame.

It should be a matter of pride that every large key workplace or Trade Union branch, Council, District and Executive Committee should elect delegates to the Convention.

There are sufficient resolute and determined fighters in the Labour Movement to achieve this.

It is time that the Bevin-Citrine bogies were smashed. They control great Trade Unions and represent the power of the State, but none of them are really big men—none of them are really organisers or trusted representatives of Labour. Bevin, Citrine, Attlee, Greenwood or Morrison have been built up by the ruling class. Press publicity, the B.B.C., the cinema, all are pressed into use, but in the private lobbies and clubs their boosters laugh at them and despise them.

The real big men are shop stewards, Trade Union branch secretaries—the men who trust and remain loyal to their class, without a thought of place or mercenary power.

They are the men who recruit to the Trade Unions, defend conditions on the job, carry out trade union activity in the branch room, see that everyone holds a trade union card, compel the observance of trade union rights and customs, elect their shop stewards and form their works committees.

They are the workers who do such magnificent voluntary service in A.R.P. ; who fight for the upkeep of the workers' press, like the scores of thousands who support the *Daily Worker* ; workers who spread socialist propaganda, expose capitalism, build up their revolutionary and political party, the Communist Party. These are the men and women with the real power—the indestructible bricks and mortar of the working-class movement. They are not in any Whitehall office or Transport House cubby-hole, they are at the lathe, bench, shipyard, mill and mine, and growing numbers of them now are in all branches of the armed forces. It is this type of man and woman who must be elected to the People's Convention.

It is this type of delegate who can form the steel framework around which the policy of the Convention is formulated.

For then its decisions will reflect the voice of decisive masses of the people, those who are incorruptible and unbreakable, those for whom decisions on vital matters of policy are a pledge of honour and who understand how they are to be applied in the concrete circumstances of their own factory, trade union and locality.

This alone can ensure that the People's Convention will be a different kind of popular gathering of the forces from those which have taken place from time to time.

This is what will lead to unity in action in every phase of the daily fight against capitalism, to a united mass movement that will secure immediate wage increases, and will strengthen and unify workshop and trade union organisation.

That will use now the same power, which in the past has defended conditions of wages and hours, for defending the homes and lives of the workers, for securing adequate Air Raid Protection measures, for ending the scandal of the homeless, and the soulless inquisition into family budgets before compensation is paid out for air raid damage. That will compel, both in factory and living place, the same degree of protection that the employers, Government and Labour leaders have for themselves and their families. That will refuse to give up hard-won trade union customs and practices, which the ruling class are trying to abolish by making the same promises to restore them after this war as they did in the last war.

That will defend the right of free speech and press for all working class organisations, that will never surrender democratic rights to a government which uses this war as a means of destroying real democracy.

That will revitalise the local Labour Movement, restore its independence from capitalism, and in this way end all tendencies aiming at restricting the functions of its organisations, as well as those of the local Town Councils.

That will see social justice meted out to the old age pensioners, the unemployed, and the dependants of the men in the armed forces, and the men themselves.

That will see vital social services are kept going and extended—housing, education, care of mother and child, and practical steps to alleviate unemployment.

That will campaign against the Sales Tax, and deductions from the workers' wages for income tax.

This type of living mass campaign carried on now and after the Convention,

will soon gather together in one gigantic mass movement all who are against the policy of the Churchill Government.

It will develop the movement that can result in the formation of a new People's Government. Those who can form such a government are exactly the type of men and women who will be at the Convention, men and women who are of the people, know what people want, and are confident of their power and ability to fulfil their needs.

Such men and women will undoubtedly take their places at the Convention. They are those who can re-organise industry and put an end to waste, mismanagement, profit and corruption, who could take over any Government post and clear out all the dead heads, place seekers and old school ties. They would transform the armed forces into an army of the people, which would know how to defend the people of Britain as the Red Army knows how to defend the people of the Soviet Union.

They would be able to reach immediate agreement with the Soviet Union, appeal successfully to the workers of Germany and France to follow our example and establish fraternal relations with the colonial peoples, helping them secure their independence and freedom.

They could organise a lasting peace amongst the peoples of the world.

There are the men, the working men, who must make the People's Convention a landmark in British History—an inspiration to all men and women to follow discussion by mass action.

Let the Convention Call ring out in every factory and local Labour organisation. Speed up the election of delegates. Enter into a competition as to which industry, profession and city sends the most number of delegates, so that when on January 12, 1941, the Convention assembles in the historic Free Trade Hall, Manchester, it can be seen that here are men and women who matter. Here are those from whose ranks the new Government must come. Here are the real leaders of the British people, calm, confident and eager to tackle every problem capitalism can never solve, ready to sweep aside the dying social order which has plunged us into this nightmare of death and misery in its efforts to preserve the power of wealth and Empire, and strong to form a People's Government for victory over the class enemy.

The Communist Party gives its full support to the People's Convention, and will do everything in its power to make it the greatest political mobilisation that Britain has yet seen of all who sincerely fight against the Churchill Government and its policy.

The Communist Party enters the campaign for a People's Convention in the same spirit of enthusiasm and determination that it has shown in the past in all genuine United Front movements of the working class and its allies. Our work for the unemployed, for every strike or lock-out in which the workers have taken part, the great Hunger Marches, the movements for Spain and for Peace, are the guarantee that we will play our part in helping forward the gathering mass movement now finding expression in support to the People's Convention. We are confident that this expression will be organised at Manchester in such a positive way as will herald a really New Year for the People, and help forward enormously the struggles of the peoples everywhere towards Power, Peace and Socialism.

A “New Order” in Europe?

BY J. REVAI

THE IMPERIALIST WAR of to-day is the natural consequence of the development which had its commencement in the period of 1918–23 when the attempts of the revolutionary workers to wrest the leadership of society away from the bourgeoisie ended in failure. Only against this historical background does the full responsibility of the Social-Democratic leaders for the present bloodshed and suffering of the toiling masses, of the peoples and nations, become evident.

For all ideas and prophecies of the Social-Democrats during the last twenty years pursued at bottom but one purpose: to imbue the working class and the whole people with the conviction that it was the mission of the bourgeoisie and of it alone to lead humanity to happiness and prosperity.

The chief cause of the great suffering and the harrowing experiences of the working class and the mass of the people in general in the capitalist countries lies in the fact that the majority of them put faith in these Social-Democratic promises and entrusted their destiny to the bourgeoisie.

The Social-Democratic leaders entered upon the second imperialist war with “new” ideas and promises. In all countries the masses were opposed to the war unleashed by the imperialists. From its very inception they had the feeling that it was possible to avert this war, that the real causes and aims of the war had nothing to do with the interests of the people but were rooted solely in decaying capitalism.

The reactionary leaders of the Second International considered it necessary to whitewash the capitalists, to exonerate them from all blame for the war and to dangle before the masses “war aims” that would satisfy the latter’s craving for a just and lasting peace. These leaders consequently produced “new ideas” which proclaimed the possibility of creating a condition of general welfare and permanent peace through a “reorganisation of capitalism.” At the same time they demagogically preached a “war of liberation for democracy,” a war for the “emancipation of the oppressed peoples.”

A bare eight months of war sufficed to expose the hollowness of these slogans. This collapse was brought about not so much by the military victories of the German armies as by the national betrayal of the French bourgeoisie (and the bourgeoisies of a number of other countries).

In many countries the Social-Democratic workers are among the immediate sufferers of the catastrophe that has befallen the people. But even in these circumstances some of their leaders seek to “adjust” themselves to the new situation. How are we to explain the fact that part of the Social-Democratic leadership is changing from the support of British and French imperialism to the support of German imperialism? Because it has turned out that certain Social-Democratic “war ideas,” even if invented originally for the purpose of

veiling the true war aims of specifically Anglo-French imperialism, can be used as ammunition by any imperialism you choose.

This clearly appears from the fate suffered by one of the most important Social-Democratic war ideas, the slogan of a "*European Federation*."

The slogan of a federated Europe was launched by the British Labour Party immediately after the outbreak of the war. In the Party's manifesto of February, 1940, this slogan figured as the "peace programme" of the British Labour movement. It was then taken up by the leaders of the Socialist Party of France. After the joint conference of the Labour Party and the French Socialist Party held at the end of February, 1940, "European Federation" became the common platform of both parties. It was soon the programme of the entire Second International and as such was popularised by all Social-Democratic parties.

What was the substance of this Social-Democratic idea of a "European Federation?" It contained three chief elements.

Firstly, differing from the League of Nations, this new European organisation was to be not only a political but also an economic organisation of the European states. There was to be instituted a "planned economy" on a European scale which would abolish anarchy of production, organise the economic division of labour in Europe and enable Europe to act as one economic unit for purposes of world trade.

Secondly, in contrast to the League of Nations, this Federation of Europe was to limit the sovereignty of its member states, to create an international executive, a "super-state authority" provided with the material instruments of power necessary to enforce the decisions of the "Federation."

Thirdly, the "core" of the Federation was to be formed by the alliance between England and France, which was to be transformed into a "permanent" alliance. The political and economic system of cooperation between England and France during the war was to be the prototype and the basis of the economic and political organisation of Europe after the achievement of victory.

These "socialist" plans were immediately taken up by the British and French bourgeoisie and interpreted to suit their own ends.

The British and French imperialists were in thorough agreement with these ideas of the economic organisation of Europe and a super-state authority.

R. H. S. Crossmann dealt with this subject in an article in the *New Statesman and Nation* (January 20, 1940) entitled "British War Aims and French Security." In this article he claimed that in the future England's responsibility for the fate of Europe ought not to be only "moral." To quote:

The test of Britain's goodwill in this matter is the extent to which she is prepared to permit her man-power and her wealth to be used *for the policing of Europe* both before and after the Treaty of Peace is signed. . . . *The Allied Supreme Command should be continued in existence together with all the machinery of economic co-operation.* (Emphasis mine.—R.)

Sir Norman Angell was even more explicit. In an article which appeared in *Reynolds' News* (January 7, 1940), he spoke of the "power of attraction" which the economic might of the Anglo-French bloc would exert over the-

small states. He stated, for instance, that the already established French and English alliance would be in a position to offer the Scandinavian countries and Holland the same economic position in the new empire as is occupied by Canada, Australia and all the other dominions. According to Angell, the factors that favourably affect such dominions as Canada and Australia must lead to the addition of similar "dominions." He did not hesitate to call the contemplated European federation by its right name, for he referred to it as the new empire, the member states of which are denominated dominions.

Sévérac, the French Socialist Party's "expert" on questions of peace, voiced the same sentiments as Norman Angell on the economic organisation of a European federation. He, too, took this to mean the "generalisation of present economic relations" between "Great Britain and France." Sévérac spoke of an internationalisation of production by means of a specialisation that would correspond to the soil and the natural wealth of each particular country.

He further mentioned the internationalisation of trade and the creation of a supernational authority charged with the regulation of quotas, currency, labour conditions, and capital investments (*Populaire*, February 24, 1940).

That is to say, he spoke of a "planned economy" within a European federation, a "planned economy" which would have put the small states of Europe economically at the command of British and French monopoly capital, would have forced upon them a "specialisation" of their national economy to suit the economic needs of England and France, would have shackled their industrialisation, opened their markets to English and French merchandise and capital, and forced them to waive all measures of economic protection.

But the small nations of Europe would not have come only under the *economic* domination of the great imperialist powers. Walter Lippmann, the American publicist, revealed in the *New York Times* the true significance of the "Federation of Europe" also in other respects. In his opinion the absurd idea that all peoples with a common language must or can exist together in a fixed political structure is bound to atrophy and die out in a federated Europe. According to him questions of boundaries and national minorities will not play a great rôle at the Peace Conference.

The right of small nations to national self-determination, the right to lead an independent political existence, was thus openly denied in the name of "European federation."

"Empire," "the policing of Europe by an Allied Supreme Command"—such was the concept which disclosed the real content of the Social-Democratic "peace slogan" of a federated Europe. In actual fact, it was a question of creating a *European empire* of England and France, of the establishment of their joint rule over Europe. That the war alliance between England and France was to constitute the "core" of the European federation was also interpreted by the British and French imperialists in their own way. "Effective guarantees" had to be set up against a revival of the imperialist competitor.

The "guarantees" that had been established at the time in Versailles had proved powerless against the elemental force of the economic law of imperialism, the law of uneven development. The re-establishment of im-

perialist Germany and finally, her forcible bursting of the bonds of Versailles led in England and France to the thought that the disparity between Germany and the England-France combination must be made infinitely greater than it was under the Versailles pact. In place of the League of Nations, which formally was based on parity among its member states, a "peace organisation" was to be created which would rest openly on the *primacy* of England and France and would tie Germany hand and foot. The equal status of the small European states was also to be abolished and they were to be incorporated in the straight-jacket organisation of the European dictatorship of England and France!

One might think all these plans were dead and buried to-day. But they are no more dead than the fabled phoenix: they were burnt in the flames of the French defeats but have arisen anew and in new shape in and after the German victories.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* which used to fight passionately year in and year out against the idea of a Pan-Europe, has now become a sponsor of this very idea:

But the core of the Pan-European idea was correct; Europe actually had to constitute itself a single economic region and must do so now if it wishes to build its existence on firm foundations.
(*Völkischer Beobachter*, June 9, 1940.)

The Social-Democratic idea of a European federation had as its premise the economic organisation of Europe. The idea current today of a "*new European order*" proceeds from the same basic thought. Schacht is working on a plan for a "directed continental economy," "an amalgamated European economy directed from one centre," a "planned economy for the whole of Europe." (*Dagens Nyheter*, June 27, 1940.)

The starting point of the Social-Democratic idea of a European federation was the consideration that the economic organisation of Europe would have to evolve from the war economy of the victorious imperialist powers and would have to be developed further on the basis thus created. The same idea of a new European order may be found in National-Socialist newspapers.

Both the Social-Democratic apostles of European "planned economy" and the apostles of "directed continental economy" take as their starting point a new *division of labour* forced upon the small and the weak by the economic (and political) power of the great. Schacht almost duplicates the words of Sévérac when he speaks of the necessity of an "inter-European and perhaps later even international division of labour." Both groups of "European plan" makers mean by this the exclusion of "all unsound competition among industries," the curtailment of industrial activity in the dependent countries (particularly those of South-Eastern Europe), the retrogression of their economy to the level of colonies, of purely agrarian countries. Bearing out the above interpretation of these plans, there was talk in Vichy of a return to "peasant France," by which was meant the abandonment of industrial, that is *proletarian*, France.

In the plans of "European federation" drawn up by the Coles and the Sévéracs, England and France were to form the "nucleus"; in Schacht's plan of Europe this was reserved, of course, to Germany and Italy:

The structure of continental economy will in all probability be one of graded differentiation. Its *nucleus* will be formed by the major economies of Germany and

Italy which together with the other national economies of the continent form one grand economic complex of Europe.

(*Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 9, 1940.)

Individual Social-Democratic leaders like De Man begin to take this new “nucleus” as their point of orientation. One may reproach De Man, the President of the Belgian Labour Party, who, in a manifesto which will for ever remain a monument of the cowardly and contemptible desertion and capitulation of a certain sort of Social-Democratic leaders, had appealed to his party to become the mainstay of the monarchist “unity party” of the Belgian bourgeoisie in formation—one may reproach this De Man with having betrayed his country, sold his people, left the nation in the lurch, but he cannot be reproached with having betrayed the Social-Democratic idea of “the organisation of peace in Europe.” On the contrary, he gives as his reason for joining the victors, the need for the “organisation of Europe.”

Peace could not arise out of a free agreement of sovereign nations and imperialist countries warring with each other. *It can arise only in a Europe that is united by common laws and in which economic frontiers have been removed.* . . . A socialist order is being established but there will be no supremacy of any class or party, but only a common weal, the token of which will be national solidarity which will soon become *continental, if not international, solidarity.* (Author's emphasis.)

Thus De Man veils his going over to the other camp by trotting out the old idea of “continental solidarity” (of the bourgeoisie).

The idea of an “organisation” of Europe was not born in the present war. It was put up as a political slogan during the first imperialist war; it was a slogan advanced by Trotsky whose “United States of Europe” was the concrete political expression of Kautsky's theory of “ultra-imperialism.” The centrists who put up this slogan took as their premise the transformation of predatory and bellicose imperialism into a tame and peaceful imperialism, and the emergence of a “new era” in which imperialist wars would be supplanted by “peaceful” agreements among the imperialists for the joint exploitation of the world. In his struggle against the Trotskys and Kautskys, Lenin exposed the utter falsity of this “theory” of ultra-imperialism and of the political slogan of the “United States of Europe” corresponding to it:

The only objective, i.e., real, social significance Kautsky's “theory” can have, is that of a most reactionary method of consoling the masses with hopes of permanent peace being possible under capitalism, distracting their attention from the sharp antagonism and acute problems of the present era, and directing it towards illusory prospects of an imaginary “ultra-imperialism” of the future. (*New data for Lenin's Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, English Edition, pp. 244-5.)

Simultaneously Lenin pointed out that while impossible in the sense of a peaceful adjustment of imperialist antagonism, as a renunciation of war, a “United States of Europe” was perfectly possible in another sense:

Of course, *temporary* agreements between capitalists and between the Powers are possible. In this sense the United States of Europe is possible as an agreement between the *European* capitalists . . . but what for? Only for the purpose of jointly suppressing Socialism in Europe, of jointly protecting colonial booty *against* Japan and America. (Lenin —, *The United States of Europe Slogan*, Selected Works, Vol. V, p. 140).

Here we find the real motives for the creation of a European federation fully and accurately exposed: it is a question of forming a fighting alliance

against the forces of Socialism, against the colonies and against the imperialist competitors overseas. These three elements, according to Lenin, constitute the *parasitism* of the "United States of Europe." In his book on imperialism Lenin quotes the English economist Hobson, who stated:

We have foreshadowed the possibility of even a larger alliance of Western States, a *European federation of the great powers* which, far from forwarding the cause of world civilisation, might introduce the *gigantic peril of a Western parasitism*.

(*New Data for Lenin's Imperialism*, etc., p. 218.)

And Lenin agrees with this statement but adds the following proviso: "Unless the forces of imperialism are counteracted." (*Ibid*, p. 220.)

A quarter of a century has elapsed and tremendous changes have occurred in the world since Lenin made these authoritative statements which presaged these deep-seated tendencies in the development of imperialism. A "United States of Europe" has been put upon the order of the day in one form or another, has been set up as the *war aim* of the imperialists. On the basis of the most profound laws of development of imperialism it has become the programme of both the English and the German imperialists, and of the reactionary leaders of Social-Democracy as well.

We do not intend to deny that there are certain differences in the programmes. These differences concern, however, only the *degree* of centralisation of the European empire, the external methods of the imperialist domination over the European peoples and nations, the tightness of the bonds that are to hold together the individual elements, but they do not concern in the least the essential point of the case.

"United States of Europe" (after the example of Napoleon's decrees of continental blockade), "Pan-America" (after the example of U.S.A. imperialism)—such are the prototypes which imperialism in laying claim to European leadership takes as its pattern.

The *analogy* with "Pan-America" is being emphasised both by those who represent the idea of a federation of Europe as well as by those who advocate the idea of a new European order.

The French magazine *Esprit* (April, 1940) contains the sketch of a European federation modelled after the Pan-American Union. It openly admitted that the Union is "*a protectorate exercised by the United States*." A uniform customs policy and the creation of an "executive" of the Pan-American Union, in whose favour the "national sovereignty" of the countries of Latin America is to be "restricted," are declared necessary because of the revolutionary, anti-imperialist movements in Latin America, the expropriation of the oil companies in Mexico, and the industrialisation of Argentina which runs counter to the interests of the U.S.A. And from the experience with this "Pan-American" body the conclusion is drawn that a "European federation" can be established only if one European power will attain sufficiently predominant "economic hegemony."

A German newspaper draws a similar analogy with Pan-America:

Very often Americans may be heard to say: Why don't you do what we did? When will you finally form a United States of Europe? Of course, to bring this about over there it also took a war, and it may even be said it took a whole series of wars. . . .

(*Frankfurter Zeitung*, March 3, 1940.)

It is not the point here that the union of the North-American States into a

national state (in the War of Independence against England and the war of the North against the slave-holding South) is intentionally mixed up with the *imperialist* war of the U.S.A. against Spain at the end of the 19th century, and the endeavour to “unite” the American continent under the domination of U.S.A. imperialism. The point is that in this quarter, too, “Pan-America” is cited in support of the claim to the right to “unite” Europe and to *monopolise* the domination of Europe, just as American imperialists cite the Monroe Doctrine, in support of their contemplated monopoly of the domination of America.

Thus, both sides cite “Pan-America” as their authority. Is there any justification for this? Yes, there certainly is. And this is not changed by the fact that the European imperialists reject the idea of a “Pan-America,” the American imperialists the idea of a “Pan-Asia,” and the Asiatic imperialists a “Pan-America.”

According to Carl Schmitt, a prominent Berlin expert on questions of international law, things are developing in the direction of the creation of “systems of major spheres with a ban on the intervention of powers alien to these spheres”. But every imperialism believes that the “intervention ban” applies only to the “major sphere” dominated by it, but not to *its* “intervention” in questions affecting the “major sphere” of another imperialist power.

As a matter of fact it is no accident that the ideas which form the basis of Social-Democracy’s plan of a federative *Europe* exert their influence, *independently* of their specifically continental-European features and details, on the plans and ideologies of *all* imperialisms which are striving for the mastery and subjugation of *their* respective continents.

The tremendous accentuation of the contradictions between the great imperialist rivals has given rise to the idea of the conquest of *whole continents* by the most powerful imperialist states, which would drive off and annihilate their rivals in order to be able to launch the fight for world domination with their rear assured and “their own” continent firmly under their heel.

The rise and strengthening of the Socialist state, and the liberation movement of the proletariat and the oppressed peoples have given rise to the idea of a union of the reactionary bourgeoisie, independent of national boundaries and interests, under the leadership of the strongest and most powerful imperialism.

In Social-Democratic ideology there are certain views which make it possible for the reactionary Social-Democratic leaders to play a leading part in the elaboration of the most important war-time ideas of imperialism.

In the first place: their *imperialist economism*, to use an expression of Lenin’s. All Social-Democratic theories of “planned European economy,” of a “division of labour” in Europe, etc., can be traced back to the age-old opportunist “theory” according to which the unification of large territories is considered to be in the interest of economic progress. This was the “theory” which caused the opportunists even before the first imperialist war to welcome imperialism as a progressive phenomenon of social development.

The enthusiasm of the opportunists for “the economic progress” effected by imperialism was so great that they considered national oppression and the destruction of independent states as secondary and unavoidable concomitants of this economic progress and condemned *national resistance* against imperialism as reactionary and anti-progressive.

As early as the world war Lenin pointed out in his struggle against the species of imperialist economism which at that time was advocated by Bukharin and Pyatakov that genuine Socialists were opposed to fragmentation and isolation and favoured unification, that is, large uniform economic areas. But they combat all "unification" which is the result of imperialist force, which violates peoples and nations, which facilitates the chauvinist contamination of the working class of the oppressing nations and renders more difficult the international education of the working class of the oppressed nations.

Lenin exposed the fallacy of posing the destruction of the small states as an *economic question* which disregards the question of their national freedom and independence and sanctions the violation of the right of national self-determination by the imperialists in the name of "economic progress."

In the last analysis the Social-Democratic theories of "European planned economy" as the basis for a "federation" of the European states amount to a declaration that national independence and freedom have been "economically" superseded, are "economically" obsolete. They discredit and undermine the idea of national resistance to the conqueror on the ground that it is incompatible with "progress." They are ideas of national subservience and national betrayal now, and of the renunciation of the struggle for national liberation in the future. They are the ideas of slaves who reflect the ideas of their masters.

The experience of the present imperialist war is cited in support of these ideas. Has it not proved that amidst the rivalries of the big imperialist states the small countries and states are unable to defend their neutrality and independence with success?

Is the fact that they are no match for their big imperialist neighbours in point of armament, organisation and economic resources not proof positive that the productive forces have come into collision with the old national frontiers, that the existence of independent small states has become incompatible with the imperialist system?

From the fact that the small states are militarily at the mercy of the big imperialist states the conclusion is drawn that the national independence of small peoples is an antiquated idea. Indeed, the system of small states is antiquated, since modern productive forces reach beyond their narrow boundaries and imperatively demand the establishment of a new social system. The various small states were "spheres of influence" of the imperialist big powers even before this war. Their "independence" was only a veil for imperialist machinations, as was evidenced by the Baltic states.

But the right of national self-determination of peoples is by no means antiquated. Yet this right is often flouted by the imperialists. Why should not the peoples declare, in view of the increasingly evident incompatibility of imperialism with the independent existence of small nations, that it is not their national independence but capitalism that has become antiquated?

Imperialism "overcomes" the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the national frontiers by trampling down independent peoples and drowning their liberties in blood. What if these peoples should draw a different conclusion from this contradiction, what if they should solve it by the overthrow of imperialism? In fact, only Socialism is able to meet the demands of modern productive forces and at the same time do

justice to the will of the peoples for freedom ; only Socialism can build a world of universal prosperity, progress and peace based on the fraternal collaboration of peoples and nations.

On the other hand, a system of "continental economy" which would be centrally "directed" in conformity with the monopoly capital interests of the dominating power, would inevitably lead, precisely because of the enormous strengthening of monopoly domination, to "autarky," to economic warfare with the other powers, and to increased stagnation. "Continental planned economy" would carry imperialist parasitism to its extreme and would, at the same time, be a weapon in its defence.

But it is precisely in the maintenance of this parasitic position of Europe that the Social-Democratic "theoreticians" and leaders are interested. All their ideas and plans for the "unification" of Europe merely conceal their belief that bourgeois Europe must assume the leadership of the capitalist world. This is the second reason why they were capable of playing the part of the ideological vanguard of European imperialism.

The third and decisive reason is the determination of the reactionary leaders of Social-Democracy to wage, hand in hand with the bourgeoisie, a life-and-death struggle against the forces of Socialism. Every "European plan" means an attempt not only to confederate the *states* of Europe against the imperialist rivals in America and Asia but also to unite the ruling *classes* of Europe against the proletariat, against the working people, against Socialism.

All exponents of plans for the organisation of Europe maintain that it is a question of "organising peace" in Europe ; but in reality it is a question of *organising war in permanence*. For it would be the function of such a European "organisation" to secure the rear of this or that imperialism in its struggle for world domination.

But an imperialist "organisation" of Europe would also be a perpetuation of war in Europe itself. The Versailles peace has shown that large peoples cannot be subjugated for any length of time. No victory or arms, no "organisation of peace" can fix for all time the relation of forces. Every change in the international relation of forces will inevitably cause the spirit of imperialist revenge—the idea that to-day you got me, tomorrow I'll get you—to flare up and will again and again involve the peoples of Europe in sanguinary war catastrophies.

Struggle and struggle alone can decide the question of the feasibility of these imperialist "planned-Europe" schemes. It is the class struggle of the working class against "its own" imperialism and against the national betrayal of "its own" bourgeoisie, it is the struggle of the popular masses for the defence and the reconquest of national independence, the struggle of the peoples against imperialism, that will have the last word, the decisive word, in determining the future of all imperialist "European plans".

The War and British Agriculture

BY GEORGE MATTHEWS

I have seen it said that we ought ourselves to grow at home all the food that we need, and I want to give you a reason or two why I think that a wrong point of view . . . the idea that we can be starved out in war seems to me entirely fallacious. . . .

(Neville Chamberlain, July 2, 1938)

In the opinion of the Government, the issue of this war depends as much upon what we can do to produce more food at home as it does upon the more conspicuous exploits of our fighting men on the sea, in the air, and on the land.

(Neville Chamberlain, February 28, 1940)

So the exigencies of imperialist war forced Mr. Chamberlain to go through the motions of eating his own words—an art in which the ruling class is becoming more and more practised. But neither the *volte-face* of Mr. Chamberlain, the oratory of his successor, nor the truisms of the new Minister of Agriculture (“This war may well be decided by the last week’s supply of food”) can undo the results of years of appeasement of the big food, fertiliser and feeding-stuffs combines, fill the bellies of the people, or conceal the fact that the same fundamental class line is being pursued in agriculture as in every other sphere of national policy.

It is true that this war may well be decided by the last week’s supply of food. It is also true, and more important, that its continuation inevitably means that more and more working people are thinking solely of how to get this week’s supply of food. It is further true that the policy of the ruling class is not only having disastrous effects on the stomachs of the working people in the towns, but is also playing havoc with the standard of living of the small farmers and the working class in the countryside. Because of this the issue of this war may well be decided in a way that neither the Minister of Agriculture nor the ruling class whose policy he carries out will like. One of the greatest weaknesses of the British Labour Movement has been the neglect of the question of agriculture. Today it is more urgent than ever before that the working class movement should pay serious attention to the problems of the small farmers and the farm workers.

The decline of agriculture has continuously advanced with modern capitalist development in Britain. For years before the present war this decline has been chronic and serious. Millions of acres went out of cultivation. Thousands of small farmers went out of business. Tens of thousands of farm workers went to the towns.

As a result, when war broke out there were 2½ million less acres under arable cultivation than in 1914, and a quarter of a million less men on the land. Two-thirds of the country’s food supplies were imported. An enormous proportion of home production depended on the importation of feeding-

stuffs and fertilisers. Add to this the lack of adequate equipment, the tumble-down state of farm buildings, the lack of drainage, the gross understocking, and the exhaustion of the soil produced on many farms by years of neglect, and one side of the picture resulting from the Government's agricultural policy is complete.

The other side is presented by the profits of the food, feeding-stuffs and fertiliser combines. United Dairies made profits of more than £600,000 a year for several years. The milling combines regularly paid out dividends of 20 and 25 per cent. The English Beet Sugar Corporation netted 400 per cent. clear profit on its original investment. Unilevers embraced more and more firms in those octopus tentacles which stretch out over half the world. I.C.I. made money from farmers' fertilisers as well as from armaments.

Eight years of National Government placed agriculture firmly in the grip of monopoly capital. Big farmers, small farmers and farm workers were affected for the worse. Agriculture *as a whole* was sacrificed.

Like the Government's class policy in foreign affairs, its class policy in agriculture came home to roost with a vengeance on the outbreak of war. With less merchant shipping tonnage than in 1914, with a greater population to feed, with home production far below its capabilities, the memories of 1917 (when Britain was within a few days of starvation) began to stir in the minds of the ruling class. There was a change in the tone of Mr. Chamberlain's references to agriculture. There was talk of higher prices for farmers, of a guaranteed market, of restoring derelict land to cultivation. This talk, and their natural class instincts, decided the policy of the big farmers. The agricultural Press toned down its criticism of the Government. The National Farmers' Union talked of national unity instead of "fighting the Government tooth and nail"—while at the same time being careful to ask for a share in the spoils of national unity.

From vacillating and half-hearted opposition to the monopoly capitalists and their Executive Committee, the National Government, the big farmers passed into alliance with them.

In view of the price they were paid this is hardly surprising. The following table illustrates the rise in prices of some of the more important products:

Cereals.		Livestock	
Wheat (without taking into account the pre-war subsidy)*	230%	Fat Cattle (prime)	44%
Oats	139%	Bacon Pigs	55%
Barley	138%	Fat Lambs	32%

It will be seen that the prices of those products (cereals) which lend themselves most easily to large-scale production (and which, incidentally, are the most uneconomic from the world point of view), have been fixed at far higher levels than obtained before the war. It is the big and medium farmers who grow the bulk of the cereals; it is they who have mainly benefited from the increase in prices. In addition, the pill of compulsory ploughing orders was well sugared with subsidy. It is true that wages were increased. That was more than offset by the increases in prices which were given immediately afterwards.

* The pre-war subsidy is omitted from this calculation because it has the effect of masking a price policy which originated before the war and has been intensified by it.

At the same time as they bribed the big farmers the monopolists more and more firmly fixed their grip on the State machine. Enough has been written in the *LABOUR MONTHLY* of the "Controllers" who run the Ministry of Food on behalf of those firms who have patriotically released them to do this work of national importance. It is sufficient here to mention that it is a director of Unilevers who is Controller of Margarine; a director of Unilevers who is Director of Imported Oils; a director of four Unilever subsidiaries who is retail trade adviser to the Ministry of Food; and yet a further director of Unilevers who is Controller of Manufactured Meat. An impressive list. Even the big farmers are uneasy about it. In a letter to the Minister of Agriculture on October 23, the President of the National Farmers' Union wrote:

... the Ministry of Food does not possess—so far as we know—a single responsible officer, having any say in the determination of prices, who has practical knowledge of agricultural production in this country. So far as concerns the Department's economic advisers, there is not one of them, within our knowledge, who has ever depended on farming for his livelihood and has a first-hand acquaintance with the economics of agricultural production.

In their desire to get a larger share of the cake the big farmers do not look with favour on the grip which monopoly capital keeps on the State, even while it bribes them. And they seem to forget that even the present Minister of Agriculture, to whom they address their requests, is himself a business man's man, as adept at helping big business to use the big farmers as in trying to arrange a loan to Hitler just before the war.

What is important is that this dirty deal between the big farmers and the monopolists, over whose details they squabble, has been made at the expense of the small farmers and workers.

Almost the first effect of the war on agriculture was the drastic cutting down of the amount of feeding-stuffs available. Only one-third of peace-time supplies were available last winter; two-thirds (according to the Government) later on; and for the coming winter probably (with shipping losses reaching the 200,000 ton a week mark in November), one-third again, or less.

Like rationing, this affected some people more than others. It was the small pig and poultry keepers, told at the beginning of the war to maintain their stocks, who bore the brunt of the blow. The big farmers usually grew, or could easily start growing, considerable supplies of feeding-stuffs on their own land; in any event feeding-stuffs merchants tend to look after their best (i.e., their biggest) customers in time of shortage. But the small man who specialised in pigs or poultry, as tens of thousands did, depended entirely on bought feeding-stuffs. What the Government's policy has meant to him is shown by the calculation of the *Daily Telegraph's* agricultural correspondent last spring that already one-third (i.e., 20 million) of the poultry in the country had been slaughtered, and by the reports of hundreds of Lancashire poultry men forced out of business during the past year. One farmer wrote bitterly to the *Farmers' Weekly* in March:

First of all our Government imbeciles ruin us by failing to have food available for our poultry and cattle, then when they have murdered our poultry they threaten

us with gaol if we don't tell them by a certain date how many we have left—presumably so that they can organise sufficient shortage of food to kill off the remainder! To crown the whole edifice of imbecility and hypocrisy we are told that Freedom is in Peril and that We Must Defend it with All our Might.

An even more striking example of the way in which, under capitalism, measures which seem to the ruling class mind the most “natural” thing in the world hit the small producers is shown by the strange case of the ploughing-up grant. It has already been said that the big farmers have found this a welcome help in their efforts to cash in on increased prices. For the small farmers, however, the Government's ploughing-up programme has often meant that they were worse off than before. This is the way it works. An order to plough up a certain acreage is issued by the County War Agricultural Committee (usually consisting almost entirely of big farmers). Failure to comply with the order carries with it heavy penalties, and may result in eviction from the farm. When the ploughing-up is completed a grant of £2 per acre is made towards the cost. Very nice for the farmer who has the capital, the implements and the labour available to make the change over from grass to arable (these, however, often seem to escape). But there are thousands of small dairy, poultry and pig farmers who have none of these things. For them, the £2 per acre grant is miserably inadequate. And the results of their inability to farm properly through lack of capital explain a great many of the crop failures this year on newly-ploughed grassland. Many of these small farmers not only lack capital; they are also in debt to the banks and the moneylenders. The Government refused this summer to state the amount of the indebtedness of agriculture to the banks, but it must run into many millions.

Another example: writers on agriculture in the past have been very fond of referring to the “three partners in the agricultural industry” (landlord, tenant and worker), by which they mean the system which enables the owner of land to exploit the farmer who manages it, and the farmer to exploit the man who works it. The first of the “partners” has not been slow to try to do down the other two. Already in the *Farmers' Weekly* soon after the war began the demand was made for higher rents. There is no doubt that the landlords, many of whom are also big farmers, have raised rents considerably since last year.

One further example of the Government's policy in relation to the small farmers may be given. Reference to the table printed above showing the increases in the prices of a number of products will demonstrate that it is precisely those products on which the small farmer is most dependent, precisely the products which have been most severely hit by the shortage of feeding-stuffs, which have been given the lowest place in the Government's price scale. Not unintentionally, either. Listen to Hudson:

Breeding and hatching should therefore be curtailed at once, and pig and poultry farmers who are dependent on purchased feeding-stuffs should, in addition, begin at once gradually to reduce their stocks. They may have to cut them down to one-third of their present numbers by the middle of this autumn.

Put beside this the increases in feeding-stuffs prices (where they have been available):

PERCENTAGE INCREASES IN PRICES BETWEEN AUGUST, 1939, AND OCTOBER, 1940.

Wheat (for poultry feeding)	200%	Maize Meal	77%
Oats	140%	Middlings	70%
Barley Meal	143%	Split Beans	60%

These rises in prices, all under the control of the Government, have again hit the small livestock producers, and especially the small specialists in pig and poultry rearing, *who are now paying the big farmers high prices for their cereals.*

Here, then, is the first big section of the agricultural population which has been hit by the war. The small farmers far exceed in numbers the big farmers. It has been estimated (by Seebohm and Astor) that there are about 55,000 farmers farming 150 acres or over, 110,000 farming from 50 to 150 acres, and 134,000 farming under 50 acres. It is the farmers in these two latter groups, amounting to some 80 per cent. of the total, who, taking them by and large, have been hit by the war.

Who else loses? The most important, most numerous and most progressive section of the agricultural population—the farm workers. It is true that the minimum wage in agriculture has been raised from its average of 34/- before the war, to 48/- today. But what the Government has been forced to grant with one hand it is rapidly taking away with the other. Agricultural wages were scandalously low before the war. Continuous pressure from the farm workers through their trade unions, and the need to keep men on the land, forced the Government to raise wages.

But already the rise in the cost of living has eaten up a considerable part, though not all, of the increase. Already it is an offence for a farm worker to seek employment in any other industry—undoubtedly a measure introduced with the intention of stabilising wages at their present level whatever happens to the cost of living. Already the journal of the National Union of Agricultural Workers is filled with reports of farmers attempting, and in some cases succeeding, in securing increases in hours. Already in a number of counties the rents of farm workers' cottages have been raised since the rise in wages. The Order in Council making possible the use in agriculture of soldier labour under military control at military rates of pay is a further example of Government policy and an indication of things to come. Farm workers are beginning to realise, slowly but surely, that behind the smokescreen of increased wages the ground is being prepared for their impoverishment, enslavement and further exploitation.

For as important as all the foregoing measures is the Government's failure to deal with the old problems of the countryside—problems which every day of war is intensifying. Rural housing for years has been a disgrace. Lord Addison estimated long before the present war that 250,000 new houses were needed in the countryside. A survey carried out in Northamptonshire showed that 5,000 out of 25,400 cottages were unfit for human habitation. Today the normal population in the villages is swollen enormously by the influx of refugees from the towns. Yet no new houses at all are being built, and at the outbreak of war even the niggardly housing programmes of many local authorities were vetoed by the Government. But the large houses of the rich still remain empty or half occupied.

Similarly, this winter it is regarded as almost certain that there will be the old problem of winter unemployment in agriculture. Even this summer all the available labour has not been absorbed, partly owing to some farmers being unwilling to pay the increased wage, but mainly owing to the under-capitalisation of most of the small farmers, which made it almost impossible for them to expand production and employ more labour. The same considerations will prevent many of them from taking advantage of the subsidy for drainage, and from putting in hand other schemes of winter work. And so the number out of work will rise.

In addition, the old lack of amenities, of proper sanitation, lighting and water supply, of village halls, social centres and educational facilities continues and is made worse by war conditions. Marx's words about the "idiocy of rural life" are not so out-of-date today as many people think.

Farm workers and small farmers—these are the people in agriculture who have been hit by the war. Big farmers and monopolists—these are the people who have benefited. *The war has created the objective conditions for an alliance between the farm workers and the small farmers against the big farmers, the monopolists, and the Government which carries out their policy.* It is the task of the working class and democratic movement to help in achieving this.

Such an alliance will not merely benefit agriculture and its workers. It will speedily have an effect on the well-being of the workers of Britain as a whole. For nothing is clearer after a year of war than the identity of interest between town and country workers. The same policy which ruins the small farmers and worsens the conditions of the farm workers also means high prices and shortage of food in the towns. Scientists estimate that the food output of British agriculture could easily be doubled. No figures are yet available of production since the war began, but it is significant that A. P. Macdougall, writing in *The Times* last spring, estimated that, allowing for the decrease in imported feeding-stuffs, the food output of British agriculture would *fall* by £60,500,000 in the first year of the war; and even *without* allowing for the decrease in imported feeding-stuffs only a day and a half's extra food would be produced. This is a measure of the complete inability of the ruling class to solve the problem of agriculture.

Moreover, the old balance between livestock and arable farming has been upset, so that even *The Times'* agricultural correspondent was forced to say on September 23:

The interference with the normal course of farming operations may . . . reduce the food output throughout the year. It is an experiment which needs to be watched carefully."

So much for "increased production".

As for high prices, a single example will suffice. The recent finding of the Perry Committee on Milk Distribution that 8d. per gallon is a sufficient margin for the distributors of milk throws a bright light on the policy of the Government's Milk Marketing Board over the past years. For, under the prices which it fixed, the distributors' margins have been over 11d. in recent years and a shilling this year, rising steadily from 10.32d. in 1933/4, when the Board started operations. How many millions have been taken from consumers and producers and put in the hands of United Dairies and Express

Dairies by the Government, how much malnutrition and disease the totally unnecessarily high price of milk has meant, can only be imagined. In the same way Government policy over the past year has not only meant that poultry farmers have been hit: it has also meant that the egg has become a rarity in working-class homes.

And even where the food has been grown, high prices to consumers and low prices to producers have often meant that it has been ploughed in or destroyed—as in the case of hundreds of acres of vegetables this year.

It is therefore in the interests of all working people to help in cementing an alliance between farm workers and small farmers around the policy indicated later on in this article. What are the possibilities of achieving such an alliance, and of carrying out a fight against reaction in the countryside? The forces of reaction are strong. Astor and Rowntree, writing of the farmers who farm over 150 acres, point out correctly that:

It is the men in this group who take active part in public affairs, who combine in farmers' organisations, and develop into leaders of the farmer-politician class. They exercise a preponderant influence on many County Councils; the local secretaries of their union act as farmers' representatives on Agricultural Committees and Wages Committees, and their national leaders work strenuously for the agricultural interest both inside and outside Parliament.

The power and organisation of the monopolists are well known. They control the State machine.

The main force opposed to these people is the farm workers and their Trade Union organisation. In face of the most bitter opposition, victimisation and difficulties they have succeeded in building up a strong Trade Union organisation in a number of areas. The last war, with its wage struggles and strikes, gave a great fillip to Trade Unionism in the countryside. It is the prime task of the Labour Movement in the countryside at the present time to strengthen and extend this organisation, and to ensure that it adequately expresses the will of the rank and file and is not a tool in the hands of reactionary leaders. Lenin wrote in 1913:

Only an independent organisation of the wage workers, which conducts a consistent class struggle, can wrest the peasantry from the influence of the bourgeoisie and explain to them the absolute hopelessness of the position of the small producers in capitalist society.

That is true today in Britain. If such an organisation is built up in the countryside it will be possible, though not easy, also to organise those who have never been organised before—the small farmers—and in this way to bring about the organisational forms and the activity which will give concrete expression to the discontent which now exists amongst them.

Farm workers and small farmers are beginning to realise that there are only two paths for them to choose from. There is the path of the ruling class, put over to the workers by the Labour leaders, who claim credit for the rise in wages and promise a new world after the war. But the workers have not forgotten that in 1938, when almost the whole of the agricultural population could have been brought into active opposition to the Government, the Labour Leaders refused to give a lead, rejected the policy of the Popular Front, and handed over the leadership of the farmers' movement to the reactionaries. It is not escaping the notice of the farm workers that it is a

Government containing the Labour leaders which has put into practice that very conscription of labour which the journal of the National Union of Agricultural Workers condemned last February *when talking of conditions in Germany*. They have not failed to note that it was a Labour member of the Government, Mr. Tom Williams, who said in the House of Commons on July 11, that he could "see no real ground for grievance" in the fact that hours had been increased in some counties. Every day the Labour leaders are increasingly exposing themselves to the workers in the countryside.

It is the alternative path which offers hope—the path of struggle with the working class of the towns against the ruling class and its Government. The Communist Party's immediate policy for agriculture and for the small farmers and workers is one around which a wide, strong movement can be built to take its part in the general progressive fight for a People's Government and a People's Peace.

A minimum wage of 60/- for a 48-hour week, with no conscription of labour; a new housing programme, control of rents, the improvement of health and educational facilities and social amenities; the nationalisation of the big estates, the abolition of tithe and the reduction of farm rents; the provision of State Credits on easy terms and State assistance for the formation of co-operative organisations of working farmers; the nationalisation of all stocks of feeding-stuffs and fertilisers, and their equitable distribution to farmers at low prices; and the replacement of all nominees of big business and big landowners on County Committees and Boards of Control by representatives of the workers', farmers' and consumers' organisations. This is the immediate alternative to the policy of the Government.

As the workers and small farmers are organised to take action around these points they will come to realise the further steps which will have to be taken to give them permanent security and peace. The example of the Soviet Union is before them as a measure of the prosperity and plenty which Socialism brings to the countryside and to agriculture. The great traditions of the English peasantry and farm workers are a sufficient guarantee that their descendants today will play their part in helping to achieve the conditions for the final overthrow of capitalism, and will not be lacking when that last great struggle takes place.

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The War for the Middle East

BY I. RENNAP

IN A RECENT speech, Mr. Churchill referred to the imminent conflict in the Middle East as “probable” in the winter months but “certain” by the spring. Both Britain and the Axis are feverishly massing troops and material in that sphere.

Before the war of 1914–1918 German Imperialism was extending its power eastwards from the Baltic to the Persian Gulf. This expansionist drive and increase of German influence in the Middle East cut across the aim of British Imperialism which was the annexation of the Arab territories, with their rich oilfields around the Eastern Mediterranean, so that the Middle East gateway to India and the Far East would be dominated by Britain. This was one of the basic causes of the last war.

Victorious British Imperialism, with its French ally, achieved its aim. It added large stretches of territory in the Middle East to its Empire. But the second Imperialist war has now raised for the second time in 25 years, more sharply than ever before, the question of the domination of the Middle East: whether British or German Imperialism should exploit the wealth of Africa and the Middle East (which produces about 20 million tons of oil annually); control the strategic gateway to India and the Far East; and dominate and exploit the tens of millions of colonial peoples in that area.

Thus, this imminent and inevitable conflict is, as Churchill said, but the continuation of the last war.

Two distinct phases can be traced in the present struggle for the Middle East.

The first phase, beginning with the outbreak of war and ending with Italy's entrance into the war and the collapse of France, was one where Anglo-French Imperialism was busily preparing the Middle East as a theatre of war. A huge army was assembled under General Weygand. Anglo-French Imperialism aimed at cutting Germany off from her vital oil and grain supplies in the Balkans. But the main objective was to open up a new front from which to attack the U.S.S.R.

With the help of the pro-British Iraqi and Egyptian governments, Britain aimed at seeking allies within the upper classes of the Moslem world. With the help of these governments the Mufti and the old Palestine Arab Higher Committee, who previously were in the pay of the Axis, were swung over to the side of Britain. In Syria the “moderate” nationalists, like the late Dr. Shahbander, were swung over towards the Allies. In Iran, the most reactionary landlords and capitalists, closely connected with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., were also roped in. In Turkey, the pro-British section of the ruling class was able to influence the Turkish Government to support the anti-Soviet aims of Chamberlain and Daladier. The aim of the Anglo-French Imperialists was to create a bloc of reactionary Moslem landlords and capitalists,

whose job was to rally the Moslem world in the Middle East behind Anglo-French war aims.

The initiative during this phase lay with the Allies. Axis penetration and influence had suffered a check. Fascist agents in the Middle East were to a large extent arrested or expelled from Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Iraq.

Militarily and strategically, domination of the Middle East lay in Anglo-French hands, in that the Eastern Mediterranean littoral, stretching from Suez to the Bosphorus, was under Allied control.

II

With Italy's entry into the war, followed by France's collapse, began the second phase in the struggle for the Middle East. France's defeat torpedoed for the time being the anti-Soviet aims in the Middle East of the British Imperialists. Britain (with American backing) was left to fight on her own. It was now the turn of the Axis to take the initiative in the life and death struggles of the conflicting Imperialisms. Unable for the time being to gain a decision against Britain in the West, the Axis is seeking this decision in the Middle East.

Militarily and strategically, the drive of the Axis in the Middle East is in the form of a three-prong movement. Its aim is a thrust through the Balkans, to occupy Syria; while the Italian forces under Graziani in North Africa have already begun the campaign against Egypt. At the same time, by attempting to drag Spain into the war, the Axis aims at closing the Western Mediterranean to Britain. British imperialism would then be completely squeezed out of the whole Mediterranean.

Syria, under French mandate, constituted, with Palestine, the gateway protecting Britain's oil resources and overland route to India. *Now it has become a dangerous breach in Britain's position in the Middle East.*

Italy's occupation of Syria would enable the bombing of the oil wells in Kirkuk and the Mosul-Haifa pipe-line. Further, it would serve as a base from which Egypt could be attacked (through Palestine) from the north, while in North Africa, Graziani could attack Egypt from the south, thus bringing the Middle East gateway between the Axis pincers and cutting Britain off from her important oil resources.

It is highly probable that the Italian pause in the Western desert has taken place in order to wait until the Axis has made Syria into a base so that the attack on Egypt can be waged simultaneously from north and south.

In the meantime Axis intrigues and disruption go on in Syria, preparing the ground for occupation. The Italian Military Commission sent to Syria is disarming the French Forces. It is trying to get the large stores of war material which Chamberlain and Daladier had hoped would be used against the U.S.S.R. The Axis is also seeking political control of Syria.

Nevertheless, the military and strategic plans of the Axis have been complicated by a powerful political factor. This is the peace policy of the U.S.S.R., its aim to maintain cordial relations with its neighbours, and its striving to limit the sphere of the war. This policy and the knowledge of the might which stands behind it, has acted as a deterrent to the warmongers of both camps. But it is also an inspiration to the working peoples of the smaller nations who are neighbours of the U.S.S.R. They know that their safety and independence is bound up with their governments drawing closer in bonds of friendship with the U.S.S.R.

III

The drive towards Syria could have been a direct thrust through Bulgaria and Turkey, either militarily, or, more probably, by threats and bludgeoning, as in the case of Rumania. Yet the Axis has taken the more difficult "round-about" path of striking through Greece for the occupation of these Greek islands in the Aegean Sea which could act as the springboard from which to occupy Syria.

That Bulgaria and Turkey have not hitherto been drawn into the war is due to their relations with their neighbour, the U.S.S.R. In spite of the reactionary character of the Bulgarian ruling class and the pro-Nazi orientation in its military circles, the mass feeling of the Bulgarian people for good neighbourly relations with the U.S.S.R. has forced the Bulgarian Government to conclude cordial relations with the Soviet Union.

This is also the case with Turkey. Here, too, there exists a mass feeling for peace and friendly co-operation with the U.S.S.R., as well as a strong sentiment against allowing their country to become a battlefield. The Turkish people know what support the U.S.S.R. gave to their national revolution and their struggle against becoming colonial slaves. This, too, is understood by a powerful section of the bourgeoisie which was represented by the late Kemal Pasha.

Turkey's industrial development, however, has not yet produced a fully developed national bourgeoisie with Imperialist aims. But a section of Turkey's bourgeoisie had already become linked with Anglo-French capital. This element is violently anti-Soviet, and was prepared to see Turkey become the spearpoint of Chamberlain's and Daladier's contemplated anti-Soviet campaign last Spring. This element, as Molotov pointed out in his speech to the Supreme Soviet, was responsible for the Turkish Government being drawn into the anti-Soviet machinations of Anglo-French Imperialism.

But the breaking of the Mannerheim Line came as a shock to these gentlemen. Even they became chary of becoming embroiled in the plans against the U.S.S.R. of Chamberlain and Daladier (although they pocketed the British bribe—in the form of a loan of £90 million). This, as well as the strong feeling of the Turkish people for closer relations with the U.S.S.R. has, for the time being, acted as a "corrective" on the Turkish government. Hence the reference to the cordial relations between Turkey and the U.S.S.R. in the Turkish President's recent speech.

This Soviet policy has also had its effects at the other end of the Middle East. As Molotov pointed out, the ruling classes of Iran and Afghanistan have also not turned a deaf ear towards the anti-Soviet intrigues of Anglo-French Imperialism. But the strength of the U.S.S.R. as well as the mass feeling of the peoples for closer economic ties with their great neighbour has also acted as a "corrective" on the Iranian and Afghanistan governments.

The drive of the Axis towards Syria and the Middle East, therefore, has gone through Greece whose ruling class had not learned the lesson that good and peaceful relations with the U.S.S.R. is the surest guarantee against being dragged into the war.

IV

In spite of the limiting effect of the Soviet Union's rôle on Axis strategy the military and strategic position is adverse for Britain. Whitehall fully appreciates the danger of an Axis occupation of Syria.

So demands have been made for the occupation of Syria.

The Evening Standard has pointed to Syria as a possible source of disturbance in an area which should be indisputably ours. We must be ready if need be to close that gap and re-establish our common frontier with Turkey.

Throw everything into Syria—wherever the Germans are.

(Major General Fuller, *Sunday Pictorial*, 5.11.40.)

It should be noted that prior to Italy's attack on Greece, similar demands were made for a strategic occupation by Britain of Greek bases.

The more cunning and astute Imperialists, however, are resurrecting the stale promises of the last war, namely, the granting of Arab independence for support of British aims. "We should appear in Syria as liberators and offer the Syrians their independence," said Mr. Hore Belisha in a speech in Parliament on November 5th.

This refrain is taken up by Brailsford. "Revive that promise (of Syrian independence—I.R.) and guarantee Syria her freedom if she will join us against the Axis." (*Reynolds'*, Nov. 3, 1940.) It has not occurred to Brailsford that those who talk so glibly about giving independence to the Syrian Arabs refuse to give independence to the Palestine Arabs, or to any of the colonial slaves of British Imperialism. Instead, he peddles around the stale Imperialist promises of the last war which the British Imperialists have resurrected, promises which would be spat upon by any self-respecting Arab.

Side by side with the military and strategic line-up and jockeying for positions, goes the propaganda barrage among the Moslem peoples from both Imperialisms. France's defeat and the capture by the Italians of British Somaliland has struck a big blow at British prestige. The Axis has taken advantage of this. New propaganda centres have been opened up in Teheran. And the spread of Fascist propaganda among the Arabs has intensified.

The Axis has been able to rope in a number of Moslem notables, renegades and traitors from the liberation movements of the Middle East. Prominent among them is the Mufti.

In the spring of this year it was reported that Whitehall was toying with the scheme of restoring the Khalifat as a means of gaining the spiritual adherence of the Moslem masses. The Mufti, then a "keen" supporter of the Anglo-French "cause" and having expressed his satisfaction with the then new Palestine Land Decrees, aimed at getting the job of Khalif. But Whitehall still distrusted him, in spite of his new-found "loyalty" to Britain and "abhorrence" of the Axis. While other members of the old Arab Higher Committee were allowed to return to Palestine the Mufti was not allowed to do so.

With the change in the situation in the Middle East the Mufti appears to have gone back to his old masters. Recently, in a cable to the *News Chronicle*, he expressed strong opposition to the new Palestine Land Decrees, while the Italian broadcasting stations are calling upon the Arab world to support the Mufti, hailing him as the "leader" and "liberator" of the Moslem world from British Tyranny.

Another Moslem notable in the service of the Axis is Amanullah, ex-king of Afghanistan, whom the Italians, it is reported, are sending to North Africa to agitate among the Moslems for support of the Axis.

The propaganda offensive of the Axis, which is going hand in hand with the military offensive against British Imperialism is being countered by a

British propaganda barrage to the Moslem world. Through its own Moslem puppets, Britain is calling to the Moslem world for a "holy war against Fascism". *The Times*, September 26th, reports that the Grand Mufti of Egypt, the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan and other pro-British chieftains have laid a curse on the Axis and have called upon all devout Mussulmen to a "Holy War" against Hitler and Mussolini!

Thus, on the basis of this analysis, the balance of forces in the Middle East, militarily and strategically, cannot be said to be too favourable for Britain. The *Daily Telegraph* is compelled to admit that "in Egypt and in the Middle East generally the margin of safety is none too large".

V

This battle for the Middle East has had catastrophic effects on the economy of the countries concerned, as the following notes indicate.

Egypt. Particularly has this been the case in Egypt. At the beginning of the war Britain, with the object of tightening her hold on that country, forced the Egyptian government to break off commercial relations, first with Germany, Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium, then with Italy and France. In normal years, trade with these countries amounted to more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of Egypt's total overseas trade and more than the total trade with Britain.

Cotton is the backbone of Egypt's economy and export trade. Since Britain was able to cut off such a large slice of Egypt's export markets, Britain last season bought cotton at very low prices.

Conditions this season are even worse. The Cotton Exchange has been closed since May. So the farmers can get no advance on their crops and are unable to buy fertilizers and other agricultural necessities. The cotton situation has an overriding effect over other agricultural commodities, so that wheat prices are about 60% of last year's prices.

For the peasants and workers this has meant suffering and hardship on an enormous scale.

Air raids and evacuation from military zones have aggravated the situation. Thousands of families have evacuated to the countryside where the people are faced with absolute starvation.

In the towns, the almost complete cessation of navigation in the Mediterranean has ruined thousands of small business men, while tens of thousands of port, cotton and other industrial workers have lost their jobs. In Alexandria alone 20 to 30 thousand have lost their jobs since June.

The cost of living has risen sharply. According to the *African World* "certain categories, including essential medical requirements and men's out-fitting, are up by 30%, boots and shoes 25%, hardware and textiles over 50% . . ."

This terrible suffering of the Egyptian people caused by the war is the *basic* reason why Whitehall, in spite of tremendous pressure, has been unable to make Egypt declare war on Italy and get the Egyptian Government's full support for the war. Within government quarters there was sharp opposition to Britain which reflected itself in the resignation of Egypt's Chief of Staff, Aziz el Masry.

On June 24th, Ali Maher was compelled to state in the Egyptian Chamber that Britain had asked him to declare war on Italy and had used "obsolete means of pressure". Appreciating the anti-war sentiments of the people he

stated that Egypt would not declare war unless Italy attacked military objectives in Egypt.

Thus the Ali Maher Government was not pliable enough for Whitehall. So it was sacked, and a new government led by Hassan Sabry Pasha, strongly pro-British, was put in office. *But even this government was unable to declare war on Italy* in spite of tremendous pressure from Whitehall and the strongly Pro-British Saadists (an offshoot of the Egyptian Nationalist Party, the WAFD) who demanded an immediate declaration of war. When Hassan Sabry refused the Saadist ministers resigned from the Cabinet.

Palestine. In Palestine economic conditions go from bad to worse. Building is practically at a standstill. Citrus cultivation, the mainstay of Palestine's economy, on which tens of thousands of Arab and Jewish workers depend for their living, and which was already badly hit before the war, is now in a parlous state.

This season's position is even worse. The *Palestine Review*, August 30th, reports that "the whole citrus crop is not expected to exceed some 9 million cases, but the disposition of even this small crop presents tremendous difficulties". This sharp decline means that large numbers of orange groves "have been completely neglected". This has meant a sharp increase in unemployment as more and more Arab and Jewish workers in the citrus groves lost their jobs.

There has also been a sharp rise in the cost of essential commodities. The index of wholesale prices tells the following story:

From August 1939 till July 1940 prices have increased by 30% on the average. Grains and meat underwent an increase of 34% in the same period, other food supplies including fruits and vegetables climbed only by 16%.

(The Jerusalem journal *Hamassad*, August 30th.)

Syria. Syria is on the verge of economic collapse, while the people are undergoing great hardships.

Thus the shortage of food supplies in Syria is becoming more and more acute and is causing real hardships in some districts. (*The Times*, September 26th, 1940.)

... at this moment she (Syria—I.R.) is poorer than I have known her in twenty years. For her gold was taken in exchange for wartime francs and this paper money of course deteriorated until discontented shoppers and market men affirm they have been robbed by France of three-quarters of their wealth. To-day, in spite of what has become military occupation backed on occasions by martial law, the bazaars are empty. Syria is too poor to buy. She has nothing to sell.

(Rosita Forbes in *Illustrated*.)

This is what this war has already brought to the peoples of the Middle East. Now their countries are to be devastated by the Imperialist robbers in the name of war for "democracy" and the "freedom of nations".

VI

What effect has this war had on the people and the liberation movements of the Middle East and what perspectives are opened up for them in this rapidly developing situation? In assessing the future possibilities a number of important factors must be considered.

First and foremost, consideration must be given to the relative industrial backwardness of the Middle East, backward even when compared with the restricted industrial development which takes place in an Imperialist colony. This backwardness is due to the paucity (apart from oil) of natural resources. This has been responsible for the relative backwardness and immaturity of the liberation movements. As a result, no strongly organised Trade Unions, and workers' and peasants' parties have arisen. This has meant that the leadership of the movements have been in the hands of the upper semi-feudal and bourgeois classes.

True, the policy of Imperialism of thwarting the industrial development of the native bourgeoisie, as well as the powerful anti-Imperialist up surge from the workers, peasants and urban petty-bourgeoisie, have driven these upper class elements into the anti-Imperialist struggle; but only up to a certain stage. These elements have always tended to compromise with British Imperialism and sell the national liberation struggle. And with the drive of the Axis into the Middle East before the war, with its "peaceful" penetration, a section of these classes has sold out to the Axis imperialists in the hope that from them they may get more concessions than from their British masters.

In Egypt, the national independence struggle is now on a higher plane as compared with the neighbouring countries and is steadily rising as the masses are gradually seeing the link between British Imperialist domination and their misery, and economic and political degradation.

The palace clique, representing the semi-feudal landlords, will not fight for genuine Egyptian independence. Their power is buttressed by British rule. Within this clique there are elements sympathetic to the Axis.

At the same time the native bourgeoisie tends to be pushed into the anti-Imperialist struggle. Britain, pursuing her policy of throttling native industrialisation and keeping Egypt as a backward agrarian country within her Imperialist sphere for obtaining food and raw material, has turned down such projects as the building of a light arms factory, the developing of iron ore deposits, the production of artificial manures, and the electrification of the Assan Dam. This policy has created starvation and suffering for the workers and peasants, since without a developing industry Egyptian agriculture alone cannot support an increasing population.

The Egyptian nationalist party, the WAFD, represents the Egyptian bourgeoisie. Up till the spring of this year the WAFD was prepared to support the war provided Britain would allow it to participate in the peace negotiations after the war, guarantee it better cotton prices, revise the status of the Sudan, and withdraw British troops from Egypt after the war. These demands were categorically refused. This, too, as well as the strong anti-war sentiment of the people, is responsible for the WAFD refusing to support the Hassan Sabry government and the war.

Thus the Egyptian bourgeoisie can, in the last resort, only be a temporary ally in the anti-imperialist struggle. Only the Egyptian workers, allied with the peasantry, can lead this struggle to a final victorious conclusion. But as yet the Egyptian labour movement (and peasant movement) is in its early infancy. There is not yet a strong organised alternative leadership to the WAFD.

In Palestine and in Syria the national liberation movements are even more backward. With the exception of the powerful Histadrut (Jewish Federation

of Labour) in Palestine which could, if it threw off its reactionary pro-Imperialist leaders, play a leading part in the liberation movements of the Middle East, only the beginnings of Trade Unionism and peasants' organisations exist among the Arabs. This has definitely been a retarding factor on the liberation movements of the Middle East.

Another retarding factor has been that just prior to the outbreak of the war the Middle East was experiencing the ebb of a revolutionary anti-Imperialist wave which had burst out in 1936 with the Palestine revolt and the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty.

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, there are increasing signs that the peoples are on the move. Among the Egyptian workers the class struggle, which is the basis of the anti-Imperialist struggle, is sharpening. On May 20th, 900 tramway men in Alexandria went out on one of the biggest strikes ever experienced for a 30% wage increase, in spite of the military ordinances and the appeals of their leaders for them to return to work. In one of the spinning mills in Alexandria, workers went out in a two-hour protest strike and were granted a 10% to 15% wage increase. The number of these strikes is increasing.

Anti-British feeling is also growing. And to the extent that the Egyptian working population begins to see more clearly that British domination is responsible for their terrible conditions, so will these strikes take on more and more an anti-Imperialist character.

In Palestine, sporadic anti-Imperialist struggles have gone on since the outbreak of war. The Middle East correspondent of the Associated Press, Ladislav Farrago, writing in the April number of *Asia*, declared that in September, 1939, 25,000 to 30,000 persons were arrested and that guerilla warfare still continues; while new detention camps have been set up in Palestine and in the neighbouring countries. Those Jewish and Arab workers who are increasingly striking for better conditions are, in the main, not yet fully anti-Imperialist. But they, too, as the situation worsens for them, will see the real cause of their suffering; and Jews and Arabs will go forward unitedly against their imperialist masters.

In Syria, deep uneasiness and unrest, because of the concentration of large numbers of troops, existed even before France's collapse. To-day, with conditions worsening, the Syrian people are neither for de Gaulle nor for Vichy. This is reflected in a statement made by Monseigneur Avida, the Maronite Patriarch:

The Maronites (a Christian Sect—I.R.) were deeply attached to their independence, and although they were bound to France by traditional friendship, they had always resisted her policy when it took on an Imperialistic colour. They certainly did not intend to allow themselves to be treated as a political pawn and to be bartered from one hand to another. (*The Times*, October 26, 1940.)

All this indicates the deep ferment and unrest among the peoples in the Middle East. It is still sporadic and not yet strongly organised. But their conditions are inexorably driving them against British Imperialism. Neither are they unaware of the rising anti-Imperialist movement which is taking place in India.

The growing crisis of the capitalist world with its Imperialist war has driven the Imperialists of both sides to seek a decision in the Middle East. The peoples of the Middle East, however, will have the final say.

The English Revolution

1640

I. A Reply to P.F.

To anyone who has read Christopher Hill's essay, *The English Revolution: 1640*, P.F.'s disparaging review of it in the October LABOUR MONTHLY must appear completely inadequate. The basis of his criticism is briefly this: (1) that Hill regards pre-Civil War society as being fundamentally feudal, and that therefore his interpretation of "the course of political events and of economic conditions and movements which led up to the Civil War" is mistaken; (2) that Hill thus contradicts the views of Marx and Engels who, according to P.F., asserted that the sixteenth century is a "definitely bourgeois, that is capitalist" society; and (3) that the Civil War was not, as Hill maintains, a revolutionary war led by the bourgeoisie, but "a war against the counter-revolution (fought) . . . to keep the bourgeoisie in power."

To deal first with Hill's supposedly "fundamental characterisation" of the sixteenth century as feudal, P.F. deduces this from three isolated quotations: "the new economic facts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [which] made the feudal and social system unworkable"; "the development of the capitalist mode of production within the structure of feudalism"; ". . . [before 1640] the structure of society was still essentially feudal; so were its laws and its political institutions."

Now no one could possibly gather from P.F.'s selection of these quotations (the second of which is, incidentally, an almost literal paraphrase of a sentence in *The Communist Manifesto*) that Hill had devoted 17 of his 72 pages to describing the very considerable development of capitalism in the sixteenth century. He speaks, for instance, of the gradual change that took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the structure of feudal agriculture (p. 20); of land tending to become a commodity (p. 22); of "a moral as well as an economic revolution" due to the new capitalist exploitation of the land (pp. 23, 24); and only then does he add "But they [the new capitalist landowners] did not have things all their own way before 1640. The struc-

ture of society was still essentially feudal: so were its laws and its political institutions. There were still countless legal restrictions on the full unhampered capitalist utilisation of landed property." Moreover, having stressed the capitalist development of agriculture as the "dominant tendency" in the sixteenth century (p. 29), Hill goes on (p. 30) to show also how "An industrial revolution took place in the century before 1640." This can hardly be read, one would have thought, as a "fundamental characterisation" of feudal society. But P.F. is determined to show that Hill "whenever he finds an opportunity, underrates the capitalist elements and exaggerates the feudal remnants." He therefore attacks Hill's conception of the function of the Tudor monarchy, which, in an extremely illuminating passage (pp. 38-44), he describes as being "to see that the inevitable acceptance of bourgeois demands did the smallest possible harm to the ruling class." And in order to strengthen his attack, P.F. asks, "since when are the demands of an oppressed class . . . to be inevitably accepted?"—a question which appears to disregard the dialectics of change and which Disraeli, one feels, having in mind his extension of the franchise in 1867, could certainly have answered. But the point here, however, is that the Tudor monarchy "inevitably accepted" the demands of the rising bourgeoisie precisely because only thus, by playing them off against the conflicting demands of the reactionary feudal landowners, were they able temporarily to maintain the power of the throne. In spite of the concessions the monarchy made in their own class interests, which for a period coincided with those of the bourgeoisie and progressive gentry, the *political* structure of the State still remained essentially feudal. But as the economic strength of the bourgeoisie increased, as they became more conscious of their power as a class, they inevitably increased their demands to the point at which the process of quantitative social change threatened to become qualitative; i.e., threatened to transform the State

into an instrument for achieving their own undivided interests.

How was this accomplished? In a classic passage in the *Anti-Dühring* (p. 186), Engels supplies the answer: "Simply through a change in the 'economic order,' which sooner or later, voluntarily or as the outcome of struggle, was followed by a change in the political conditions. The struggle of the bourgeoisie against the feudal nobility is the struggle of the town against the country, of industry against landed property, of money economy against natural economy; and the decisive weapon of the burghers in this struggle was their economic power, constantly increasing. . . . During the whole of this struggle political force was on the side of the nobility, except for a period when the Crown used the burghers against the nobility, in order that the two 'estates' might keep each other in check, but from the moment when the burghers, still politically powerless, began to grow dangerous owing to their increasing economic power, the Crown resumed its alliance with the nobility, and by so doing called forth the bourgeois revolution, first in England and then in France."

It is unnecessary here to pursue this point, though in fairness to Hill it should be pointed out that P.F.'s further accusation that Hill "forgets" there existed a large agricultural proletariat, is rebutted by reference to pp. 28-30 of Hill's essay. Nor is it necessary, perhaps, in view of this long quotation from Engels, to devote much space to P.F.'s assertion that Hill's interpretation contradicts that of Marx and Engels. Nevertheless it is important to show that, in attempting to justify this assertion, P.F. misrepresents a statement of Marx. The passage he quotes runs: "We cannot deny that bourgeois society has been for a second time living through its sixteenth century, a sixteenth century which I hope will sound its death knell as surely as the first brought it into life." To which P.F. adds the gloss: "Marx, for example, says quite clearly that he regards British society not only immediately before the Civil War but already in the sixteenth century, as *definitely bourgeois, that is capitalist*"; and again, "Marx is right: the sixteenth century *is* a bourgeois society (my italics, D.M.G.). Marx says nothing of the kind: it is P.F. who mistakes the egg for the chicken."

Moreover, he entirely omits to mention that this passage occurs in a letter to Engels written in 1858 (*Selected Correspondence*, p. 117), in which Marx is discussing the

development of bourgeois society, not in Britain, but on a world scale—as a result of "the *revolution* (which) has *begun*" in Russia. And contrasting the situation in the rest of the world with that on the continent of Europe, he goes on to say that in the former, where bourgeois society has now experienced its sixteenth century "the movement of bourgeois society is still in the ascendant." Thus, though the revolution had begun in Russia by 1858, and was to be accelerated by the liberation of the serfs in 1861, the rising power of the bourgeoisie was not to find expression in revolution until 1905 and 1917. Only then was society in Russia to become "definitely bourgeois, that is, capitalist." This quotation from Marx, therefore, far from proving that Hill contradicts him, simply shows that P.F. misunderstands him. Marx, and Hill following him, is concerned to show historical development as a *process*, brought about by conflicting social forces; whereas P.F. can only discern a succession of neatly labelled social orders.

But the reason for P.F.'s interpretation can only be understood when we come to the penultimate paragraph of his review. For here, in the modest compass of a dozen lines, he puts forward a new conception of revolution. "Under Charles I," he says, "there was a counter-revolutionary movement. . . . The Civil War of 1642 began as a war against the counter-revolution." By implication, the revolution, therefore, had already taken place. And one can only ask, When? Certainly, as Hill is careful to explain, the industrial revolution had *begun* in the sixteenth century (and indeed was to continue through the next three hundred years), but, to quote Marx's expressive words, "the fruits of this would themselves have been forfeited if men had tried to retain the forms under whose shelter these fruits had ripened. Hence came the two thunderclaps—the revolutions of 1640 and 1688. All the old economic forms, the social relations corresponding to them, the political conditions which were the official expression of the old civil society, were destroyed in England." (*Selected Correspondence*, p. 8.) It is, surely, to this "official expression of the old civil society" that Hill refers when he speaks of the structure of society as being, in spite of the high tempo of capitalist development in the two preceding centuries, still feudal up till 1640.

P.F. denies this, and he does so apparently in order to introduce the theory that the English Revolution had already taken place in the sixteenth century—a theory which, if

pursued to its conclusion, would seem to lead to reformism. The capitalist state, however much to-day it may be ageing, is a lion that was certainly not whelped in peace; and if in 1940 we are to use the revolutionary lessons of 1640, we must be clear on this point. This is the significance of Stalin's answer to H. G. Wells when he said: "The Communists base themselves on rich

historical experience which teaches that obsolete classes do not voluntarily abandon the stage of history. Recall the history of England in the seventeenth century. Did not many say that the old social system had decayed? But did it not, nevertheless, require a Cromwell to crush it by force?"

DOUGLAS GARMAN.

II. A Rejoinder

I AM GLAD that the answer of Mr. Garman to my review of Christopher Hill's book *The English Revolution 1640* gives an opportunity to discuss in more detail some of the issues involved.

The *first* problem of importance is the appreciation of the character of society in England at the end of the 16th century. Mr. Hill says that the structure of society was "essentially feudal", that "England in 1640 was still *economically** a feudal state", and that "the 'independent' gentry—Oliver Cromwell's class—had been the spearhead of the revolution because they wanted to abolish the monopoly of social and political privileges attached to *feudal* (Mr. Hill's italics) landholding". Mr. Garman, in defending Hill's book, adds that I did not mention that Mr. Hill devotes many pages to a description of "the very considerable development of capitalism in the 16th century".

Since three-fourths of my review dealt with the problem of the appreciation of English society as a whole and not with the description of the development of the individual elements, I shall first deal with the question: was English society in the 16th century "essentially feudal" or essentially bourgeois?

Let us take the various strata and layers of society. The chief industry of the country was agriculture. Feudal agriculture is characterised by the fact that the oppressors are lords of the manor and the oppressed are serfs. All the evidence which I have read (including the appreciation of the development by Marx in *The Capital*;) points to the fact that the feudal methods of agriculture had been abandoned to a large extent by the end of the 16th century.

Strongholds of feudalism still remained, but agriculture had become essentially capitalist. Progress was at first slow but accelerated toward the end of the 15th

century and during the 16th century. For instance, the dispossessed section of the agricultural population, the agricultural proletariat, assumed considerable proportions.

The 16th century also witnessed the development of manufacture to such an extent that Marx dates the manufacturing age from the middle of the 16th century. While the medieval guilds remained for quite a time to come, the capitalist forms of production of industrial goods dominated the industrial life of the nation. The City accumulated money not chiefly through usury but through the use of money as capital in agricultural, manufacturing and mercantile undertakings. That is, the dominant note of the economic life of the nation was bourgeois-capitalist (with "bourgeois" included the capitalist aristocracy of the land).

As to the ideological development I need say little. The mention of names such as Shakespeare and Bacon and a reminder of the development of chamber music must suffice here.

As to the political development, the problem is considerably more complex. I cannot agree with Mr. Hill that the "feudal landholding class had a monopoly of social and political privileges". Feudal power was finally broken by absolutism. On the other hand, it would be an exaggeration to say that the bourgeoisie was already established as the ruling class. In my opinion the bourgeoisie (represented through Parliament and filling the King's Council) became under the Tudors the prime-moving factor in the political life of the nation. The king, or absolute monarchy, was, under the Tudors, the form of State power corresponding to this stage of development of the bourgeoisie: it rested for its main support on the bourgeoisie and carried out its policy actively in the interests of the bourgeoisie. The large powers of the king were supported by the bourgeoisie because he

* My italics in answer to Garman's implied contention that Hill characterises only the political structure of England in 1640 as "essentially feudal".

shared the interests of the bourgeoisie in the suppression of feudalism. He was the product of bourgeois development, as Marx wrote—though not the helpless instrument of the bourgeoisie.

With national economy predominantly capitalist, with national ideology predominantly bourgeois, and with the bourgeoisie as the prime-moving force in things political, I am convinced that English society in the 16th century must be described as essentially bourgeois, although feudal strongholds remained, especially in the North and in parts of the West. This distinguishes English society before the Great Rebellion in the 16th century from French society in the 18th century before the Revolution, for the latter was essentially feudal although bourgeois capitalism was developing steadily.

I cannot quite understand why Mr. Garman has the feeling that I misquoted Marx when I referred to Marx' statement that bourgeois society is living for the second time through its 16th century. Does Mr. Garman deny that Marx refers to England when he speaks of the 16th century? To which other country could Marx refer if he speaks of bourgeois society in the 16th century? And as to the 19th century, Mr. Garman is wrong when he thinks that Marx calls society in Russia (in 1858) bourgeois. He speaks of the bourgeoisie on a world scale beginning to invade (but not yet having conquered!) ever new countries, Russia, China, Japan, etc. (The dominant element of the world bourgeoisie at that time also was England with her industrial and colonial monopoly.)

I have the feeling that I do not "mistake the egg for the chicken" as Mr. Garman says, but that he forgets that conception and birth are not identical.

The *second* point raised by Mr. Garman is that I misrepresented Mr. Hill's study by not pointing out that he dealt extensively with the development of capitalist elements within the framework of a feudal society. I want to answer this first by pointing out that this argument has, of course, nothing to do with the previous issue raised. For the previous issue deals with a summary characterisation of society, and whether Mr. Hill deals extensively or little with the development of capitalism, he is wrong in characterising English society in the 16th century as essentially feudal, if I am right in my estimate.

Secondly, I not only mention the fact that Mr. Hill deals with the development of capitalism, but also criticise his presenta-

tion (even though in a few words only, just as I deal only briefly with every other problem raised in the review, with the exception of the first problem dealt with in this rejoinder). And I must still maintain my criticism that Mr. Hill "underrates the capitalist elements and exaggerates the importance of feudal remnants". I should like, however, to limit this criticism by saying that it refers chiefly to those parts of his study where he summarises his preceding descriptions.

The *third* issue is the estimate of the changes in English society under Charles I (changes which could already be observed under James, and perhaps even in the last years of Elizabeth). I called Charles' government counter-revolutionary—not a very happy expression, and one that should certainly be corrected. It should be replaced by reactionary. Absolute monarchy was a product of bourgeois development in England at a time when this form of government and its institutions were a valuable safeguard against feudalism. With the progress of capitalism, absolute monarchy became a hindrance.

When the king and the bourgeoisie began to realise that the system of government which up to then had worked rather satisfactorily would have to be changed somehow, the king looked for allies. The king was, as we have said, not simply a helpless instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie but had a certain independent power corresponding to the stage of transition between the classes. In order to keep this power and to extend it the king turned for support to the feudal remnants and to the reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie. With the help of these groups he tried to reign against the majority of the bourgeoisie, especially the industrial and merchant bourgeoisie.

Out of this conflict developed the Great Rebellion, the Civil War. The Great Rebellion, therefore, is, in my opinion, not the war of liberation of a suppressed bourgeoisie against feudalism—as was the Revolution of 1789. It represents rather a new and very important step forward in the progress of bourgeois society, a fight for the abolition of absolute monarchy, against the remnants of feudalism, against the reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie, against every element which might retard the vigorous development of bourgeois capitalist society.

While Mr. Hill summarises the result of the English Revolution: "An old order that was essentially feudal was destroyed by violence, a new and capitalist social order

created in its place"—I would say instead: bourgeois capitalist society made a very great step forward and was victorious in a bloody struggle against all those elements who wanted to retard, or stop, or even revert, its progress.

Mr. Garman objects to this interpretation as reformist, and asks where and when did the midwife force come into action if society in the 16th century already was bourgeois. It seems to me that Mr. Garman does not see the wood for trees, or rather the maternity home for the midwife. Beginning with the War of the Roses—the mass-suicide of the feudalists which the bourgeoisie utilised to implant its roots firmly—proceeding by way of peasant revolts, the confiscation of the Church lands, the Pilgrimage of Grace, the rising of the northern earls, bourgeois society came into being. This is not reform-

ist, but an interpretation which corresponds to that of Engels who in contrasting the development in England and France says: "The feudal fetters were smashed, gradually in England, at one blow in France".

As to the quotation from Stalin I fully agree with it, of course. Of course, the old system had decayed and a new one had overgrown it—but nevertheless, as Stalin points out, it required a Cromwell to crush it. The lesson to be drawn from this is: even if a system is decayed, it by no means is already dead and harmless. Stalin would have advised the revolutionary leaders of 1640: Beware of the feudal elements in bourgeois society! and he would have given this advice, not in 1640, but considerably earlier.

P. F.

BOOK REVIEW

Following Ramsay MacDonald

Where Do We Go from Here? By Harold Laski. (Penguin Books.) 6d.

LASKI's new book is written out of fear—the fear that the British ruling class is not after all invincible, and the Labour leaders are backing a loser. During "nine months of bitter defeat", the bankruptcy of our rulers has been plainly revealed in the sensational failure of successive British Governments (a) to win victories, (b) to attract allies, (c) to organise production, or (d) to keep the confidence of the people. In particular the restless, suspicious, disillusioned mood of the workers is a cause of continual anxiety to the Labour leadership; and no one is better aware than Laski that the slogans of capitalism and official Labourism have utterly failed to dispel this mood. The inability or unwillingness of the present Government to get any kind of agreement with the Soviet Union is also extremely worrying from the point of view of winning the war. Hence Laski's attempt to suggest ways of getting round these unwelcome consequences of class rule (which he fully recog-

nises), without contesting here and now the right of the ruling class to continue in power.

Significant, throughout, is his recognition of the strength of the Communist case against supporting the war—a testimony to the growing influence of such arguments among the Labour rank and file. Gone are the easy denunciations of the Communists as "conspiring with Hitler", and instead we get an attempt (rather unconvincing) to answer their arguments. The book even shows a certain respect, though no friendship, for the Soviet Union, whose "Machiavellian" actions since August, 1939, are "explained though not justified" by the fact (which Laski admits) that the British Government was never sincere in negotiating for a pact.

Laski admits at the outset most of the Communist case against the past actions of the British ruling class. He admits their class sympathy for Fascism, which built up Hitler; their class hatred and fear of the U.S.S.R., which wrecked collective security. He admits that, in the past, capitalists have

always attacked democracy wherever it threatened their profits or their class rule. And he agrees too, that because capitalism cannot solve the economic problems of society, it cannot keep peace either; there was not room for all the rival imperialisms to expand without coming into conflict, and there can be no permanent peace without socialism.

How, then, does Laski justify his support for the war? Firstly, by arguing that monopoly capitalism and Fascism are fundamentally different. British imperialism is "only" capitalist, "only" imperialist, while Hitler and Mussolini are "outlaws", imperialists of a new type, who have overthrown all order, even the monopoly capitalist order, in their desire for personal wealth and power. Secondly, he holds out the hope that the British ruling class are so frightened of these "outlaws" that they can be induced to come quietly, without resistance, to give up their vested interests and be peacefully absorbed into a Socialist order, in alliance with the U.S.S.R., rather than lose the war.

The evidence on which this Utopia is founded is extremely thin. Germany is no longer capitalist, it seems, and the Nazi system terrifies British capitalists—because dividends are fixed and the State interferes in industry! (On the same reasoning, Britain in wartime, with E.P.T. in operation, is no longer capitalist either). But why, we may ask, should British capitalists be so bitterly opposed to a system that limits dividends that, in order to fight it, they are willing to give up the right to dividends themselves? The argument would be more convincing if Laski had not just before (pp. 27–30) showed something of the lengths to which British capitalists were prepared to go in support of Fascism and showed too (pp. 41–42) that in France, when faced with the choice between revolution and Fascism, big capital with one voice chose Fascism and welcomed the conquerors as its class allies.

As for the British ruling class giving up their vested interests "by consent" do they in practice look like doing it? While Laski preaches "revolution by consent", the capitalists pile up their profits, lower the workers' standards, and grab for themselves

all the available goods, shelter and safety going.

Laski is clever enough to understand this quite well. He knows well enough that only if the people take power away from the capitalists can "vested interests" be curbed and Fascism defeated. But he fears and hates revolutionary tactics and class struggle, and above all he lacks any confidence in the ability of the workers to carry through a revolution in Britain or in Europe. And therefore he makes no appeal to the workers, but always to the ruling class—that ruling class which, as his own analysis shows, cares nothing if democracy is destroyed, so long as it continues to rule.

"Please change your nature, behave like gentlemen, and prove the Communists wrong; for up to now everything you have done proves that they are right about the war". That is the gist of the appeal to the Government. The workers are apparently to sit still and wait for this miracle, meanwhile supporting the war.

What changes, then, does Laski propose? It is here that the book is most vague—wisely vague, since to reduce his "revolution of the spirit" to a concrete programme would show all too clearly that changes which would be of real value to the workers must be such as to meet with the sharpest and most violent resistance by the capitalists. Here, therefore, Laski writes mistily of "ending the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty", of effecting "a massive redistribution of economic power", of "ending the rule of privilege"—without a word about concrete proposals or the struggle that, on his own analysis, is necessary to give these phrases any reality.

Such vague platitudes will neither inspire nor mobilise anyone; at most they can serve, like similar phrases from a MacDonald, to keep some part of the movement drugged and passive in face of the enormous tasks confronting the workers today. But the working class will not accept this policy of despair and do-nothing. The support for the People's Convention proves that many rank-and-filers have ceased to look for a solution from the ruling class; they are ready as workers to take the responsibility and fight for a new way forward.

MARGARET HESTON

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